

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office

January 11, 2000 LB 505

people who get addicted as children to an addictive substance that will take their lives or shorten their lives beyond any question. Medically, smoking shortens and takes lives. For everyone? No. Most of us have somebody in our family, a 92-year-old uncle who's been smoking for 30 or 40 years and he's one of the oldest people in the family. It doesn't happen with absolute regularity. It happens as a statistical body of all the variations that there are in life to clearly establish that smoking kills, and we all know it. Talk to a smoker. They might say, I got to say, I love to smoke, but they'll also say, and I know it's not good for me, and they'll laugh when they have the smoker's hack and they'll make an excuse, but they know it when they wake up in the morning. They know it's causing harm and they know they're addicted. Do you know that in the recent polling we did about LB 505, Democrats, Republicans, Independents all supported a thirty-cent tax increase if it went to prevention by about the high sixties to almost seventy percent. Women and men both supported it. One group didn't support it in that proportion. In fact, there was one group that was against the idea of a cigarette tax increase and they were cigarette smokers. And you know what the breakdown was? Fifty-nine percent were against the tax increase; 40 percent were for it. Why? Why, from people who would, in fact, have to pay a tax, be darn angry about it, who among us don't know that there are angry taxpayers, why would 40 percent of them say, gulp, I guess I'd be in favor of it? You know why? Because they know smoking is lethal, it's bad for them. They'd like to get done with it, but they can't break it because it's addictive and they know that kids start early. You know how they know? Because they started early. They started as kids. The person who at 30 decides to smoke is somebody that I don't think any of us here have a knowledge of, maybe one person or two that we know of. People start when they're 12, 13, 14, and 15. They get hooked, they get addicted, and people who are 40 and 50, who have been smoking for 20 or 30 years, know it, because that's when they started. They started young. What are the reasons? Cigarette tax, I'm sorry, cigarette companies target kids for their smoking advertisements. They target kids by making smoking cool and, you know, hopefully, when you're 35 or 40 cool is probably still somewhat important but it's not life or death. Maybe your retirement is of your concern, maybe your paunch is of your concern, maybe your job security is of a concern, but