

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
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said, why do you feel so strongly about this? I do feel strongly about this because it goes to a bedrock principle that I believe we have to settle in our own mind, and that is, who should pay? I believe in personal responsibility. I'm speaking to every conservative in this room. As a bedrock principle, you have said we should not rob Peter to give it to Paul. As a bedrock principle, you have said people should earn their own way. You have said, as a bedrock principle, that people should work hard, they should pay their way, they should pay fair taxation, but they should not be overly taxed. And what I'm telling you today is that people in Nebraska are being overly taxed to pay the health-care needs of smokers, and we are facing another program today, a question about another program, and we are asking who should pay, and we're saying let's put it back on the backs of every taxpayer in Nebraska. I am not willing to raise the income tax on the nonsmoker to provide education for this program. I am not willing to increase the sales tax burden on the nonsmoker to pay for this burden. I am not willing to see property taxes go up while the state funnels its resources into providing this program. What I propose to you is that those who make a choice, and they have a right to make that choice, to pick up a cigarette, to light up, that they should pay a fair proportion of the cost of that health care. I wish that Senator Jensen was here to tell you exactly what that cost is but, believe me, it is far more than the tax increase being proposed here. LB 505 isn't what we should be debating. That should be a given. What we should be talking about here today is this amendment and how we should be spending these tax dollars. Something is awry here in this state when we have smokers paying for buildings and nonsmokers paying for the healthcare of smokers. That's what we should be debating. We should be talking about how to spend these dollars in the best way to provide healthcare, cessation programs, education programs, and everything we can to put the responsibility back on those who make the choice. Thank you.

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: Thank you, Senator Redfield. Discussion on AM2018 on LB 505, Senator Beutler.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Mr. Lieutenant Governor, members of the Legislature, continuing the discussion, I think maybe we should talk a little bit about whether this is a measured response or