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March 16, 2000 LB 505, 1427, 1436

SENATOR JENSEN: Thank you, Mr. President, members of the body. Yes, I'll open and give some of my time to Senator Bohlke. To the 38 senators who signed as cosponsors on LB 1436 and to the 23 senators who voted to advance LB 505 and to all those who feel that smoking and tobacco use is a major public health issue, this amendment is for you. I have handed out an outline of the amendment and a chart that also incorporates the changes made to the Health Care Funding Act, when LB 1427 was advanced yesterday. I want to begin, first of all, by thanking Senator Bohlke for bringing the issue of teen smoking prevention and cessation to our attention and for her willingness to work with me on this amendment. I also want to thank Senator Landis for his diligence in fighting tobacco use through LB 505. The amendment basically does two things, it uses a one-time allocation of future tobacco settlement payments, spread over a three year period, to directly fund a comprehensive tobacco related public health program in the state like that contained in AM2018 of LB 505, the tobacco tax bill. This bill has no tax consequences. Secondly, the amendment incorporates the funds of the Tobacco Education and Prevention Project from LB 1436 as a part of that comprehensive program. You might ask whether the amendment is consistent with the trust fund concept of the Health Care Funding Act. I believe it is, and I'd like to tell you why. First of all, it is consistent with the purpose of that act and shifts the funding of tobacco related public health activities from the Nebraska Health Care Cash Fund, where it is currently, to the newly created Tobacco Prevention and Control Cash Fund. Secondly, I believe it's consistent with the concept of using certain amounts of IGT funds up front to fund nursing facility conversions. This amendment would take a certain amount of tobacco settlement revenues up front to fund a tobacco related public health program, that is why those revenues are coming into the state, just as the IGT funds were coming in through nursing...through the nursing program of Medicaid and then to be used in governmental nursing homes. The amendment, in my mind, doesn't compromise our attempt to more fully develop the Health Care Funding Act next year. And I commit to you and to the committee and to Senator Byars that we will work diligently this summer, with all of your help, to come up with a...again, comprehensive plan to the trust fund. I believe this is also consistent with the tobacco...the smokeless coalition tobacco part of LB 505, and from that I draw these