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LB 210

SENATOR WEHRBEIN: ...to go on in this area. Thank you.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Wehrbein. Senator Connealy.

SENATOR CONNEALY: Thank you, Mr. President. I would have rather had this as a bill. We were told time and time again that we didn't need it. We asked in an interim study last year, how are you going to fund this program? We did not see, committee counsel and different individuals, how this was going to work with the fee structure that was in place. We were afraid that this was going to happen. We were told time and time again that, no, things were fine; we were going to be able to continue this program. After bill introduction, we had noticed that this program was out of money and was going away. I don't know what else to do. The Department of Labor was between two very distasteful things--raising a tax on insurance or funding something with fees that were hard for businesses to deal with. And so I know...I understand where they were. What I think they did though is just not make a decision, and not make a decision caused us to go broke. So we were past the time of bill introduction, that I'm sorry about, but I don't see any other way to keep this program going without dramatically increasing fees, which the Department of Labor will not do, and I don't know whether they should dramatically increase fees to keep this program running. I think it ought to be socialized, charged by to the general good, the general workers' compensation insurance, because it is...it keeps workers' compensation rates down in the long term, I believe. I passed out a piece that says employers subject to LB 757, and there are a lot of employees that are under this, but in particular there are state and local governments and public power entities that are not subject to OSHA. So they have no other inspection, other than their own insurance company inspections and the like. And so this is part of the process, that we help our local governments do a better job at safety. I believe that this is a program that's worth saving, that may have gotten out of kilter maybe for good causes--not wanting to raise taxes, not wanting to raise fees--but I think that they ran out of money and we need to fix this. And so I'd ask that you'd give me some