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FLOOR DEBATE

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it was my feeling that not one of the nine earmarks currently in place are of greater consequence to the financial crisis that currently faces the state of Nebraska, and if they are, and if they are of a high priority, they can always be added back in later as a part of General Fund appropriations. Now this amendment has a number of upsides and, as you may suspect, it has a number of downsides too, so let me talk about some of the upsides. The upsides, in my mind, I believe it allows a flexibility in the allocation of funds, revenues, that are created by the cigarette tax. Number two, it doesn't raise cigarette tax. It keeps the tax at where it is at 64 cents a pack. It also maintains the integrity of Senator Brashear's LB 759. If this amendment, and when this amendment, is adopted, it would not, basically, screw up or derail the work of the Revenue Committee because the vehicle, which is LB 759 before us right here, would remain intact. One of the upsides is, is that it will force we, the Unicameral, as an entire body to examine what we are setting as priorities for the state of Nebraska. It would also provide the Appropriations Committee a little bit more breathing room to allocate revenues as they see fit. Finally, this amendment is understandable, it's explainable, and it directly, it directly confronts the fiscal problem that we face. Now there are some downsides. You've probably heard some of the downsides and I imagine we'll hear some other ones. For one thing, it's very painful. It's hard medicine for hard times. This amendment, when adopted, will suspend funding for a number of programs. Like I said before, if we find or if we feel that those priorities or that funding needs to be continued, we can always add that back in. Because it is unpleasant, it will also begin us down the path I believe we have begun today, the unpleasant task, and it isn't pleasant, of prioritizing our state spending. Now up to this point the entire body hasn't been really actively involved in that. We've put that burden off to the Appropriations Committee, and they've been doing a great job. They've been working late. But this amendment would actually give them a little bit more breathing room and it also forces us to confront whether or not we're true to that saying, whether everything truly is on the table or not. I handed out a little bit of a handout to try to explain. Senator Johnson asked me, after I actually got up this morning. He said, could you give me something in black and white that