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germane to to do that. If we don't discuss this this year, I think the public is going to wonder what the heck we're doing down here because everywhere I go people are real comfortable with raising these kinds of taxes, alcohol and cigarette taxes, and some...and broadening the sales tax base. As long as it isn't their industry or they don't have to collect it, they like the idea of broadening the sales tax base. So I urge you to keep this alive because we need this piece. We are going to need this piece of the puzzle and we're going to need it as much today as we're going to need it if we want to be out of here in June. We've got to have options, and one of these options is to increase the cigarette tax. And the tool in my view if I were developing a budget would have been there. Now this is one of those issues that the Governor and I apparently have some strong agreement on, and it was in his budget package also. But I urge you to look at this for two reasons; one is the revenue and to keep our cigarette tax revenue from slipping any more than it might, and to ensure that we have responded to the public's interest in what we should be discussing in terms of taxation, and also because of the public health benefit, the benefit that we know is researched based that price makes a difference in decreasing the smoking of teenagers and preventing them from starting. It also has an increase among women and pregnant women and these are all policy objectives that help us. There is a statistic that I've heard our Chair of our Health and Human Services Committee state over and over and it's the other thing that I think is the most compelling reason for this. And that is in our Medicaid budget, our state Medicaid budget, smoking-related expenditures from health care caused by tobacco use cost us \$45 million. That's just our portion. That is not the federal portion. If you want to see the state and federal tax burden, our state and federal tax burden to our taxpayers caused by tobacco-related health costs, it's \$260 million a year. So you can have two benefits from increasing the cigarette tax. You can have some increased revenue and you can help us to deter people from smoking, from teens smoking, from others who will be discouraged from smoking. Our revenue will go down but it's costing our taxpayers \$260 million in revenue to take care of people with smoking-related diseases in the state. And with that, I urge your support of this amendment.