

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office
FLOOR DEBATE

April 23, 2003

LB 759

is Senator Bourne, to be followed by Senators Brashear, Connealy, Cunningham, Thompson, Friend, Dwite Pedersen, Raikes, Stuhr, and others. Senator Bourne.

SENATOR BOURNE: Thank you, Mr. Lieutenant Governor, members. I, too, rise in opposition to this amendment. Senator Landis talked quite a bit about what border bleed was and the testimony that we heard on a similar proposal in the Revenue Committee. And I just want to expand on what border bleed is. As Senator Landis mentioned, the majority of our population lives along the borders or the edges of where our state adjoins other states. And what that means is is that people will just simply go across the river or go across the state line to buy their cigarettes. So because their tax is lower, and because their tax is lower, their price per pack is lower. So then you might say, well, so what? What does that matter? Well, it matters because there is a large number of retailers that are on those borders that will lose out on sales. And, again, why would that matter? Well, we had a number of these individuals come into the Revenue Committee and testify, and these are people like you and I. They are simply trying to earn a living, support their families, and they feel that this would be detrimental to their business. We've already increased this tax. We did this under the temporary tax last year in the LB 1085. We increased it by 30 cents. Then Senator Brashear's proposal, as part of his package, just maintains that tax but it doesn't place an additional tax on there. And as Senator Landis mentioned, what we're asking is a small proportion of our population to shoulder a disparate burden of our budget problems, and I don't think it's fair and I don't support the amendment. I do want to note, it's interesting, Senator Thompson handed out her constituent survey results and one is from District 14 and one is from Nebraska Voices for Children statewide. And I don't understand what the Voices for Children have to do with whether or not cigarette taxes should be increased. But these surveys are interesting. And Senator Thompson is not the only one that hands these out. Others do. And I guess I just don't want people to misunderstand. I mean these are not scientific surveys. They are sent out in the mail, you know, to people. By no means are these results reliable. I think we could just as well ask my grandmother's knitting group what they feel they