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we're going to come back in another two years and have the same problem perhaps. And so I'm trying to figure out what the best thing is here too. I think I'm going to support this, but I'm trying to think of what happens if it doesn't go.

SENATOR THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. President. Members of the body, all the cities, as you know, on a per capita basis get the MIRF fund and it flows through, through cigarette tax earmark that flows through the General Fund with a hold harmless, so you can pretty much say that it's a \$3 million piece of our budget. No one can pledge the full faith and credit of the state beyond two years, so some language was brought in. This bill was amended...the law was amended to allow the situation to occur with a little tighter language about pledging it and so forth, but no attorney for any city could say to a city staff, you can pledge this. They still have to pledge property tax behind it because it's a two-year budget and, as you know from being here, anything can happen. I think we're just putting off the pain. I say deal with it now. We're going to have a couple hours here, a couple hours in hearing, so forth, that's fine, in two years, but we'll be back to the exact same thing. This...the obligation of the state is to take care of our constitutional responsibilities first. I call that our core responsibilities. We do some other things and I call those our "United Way" types of things that we do, and that's where people come in, make a case we ought to give state money for something that we feel is important for some reason. This is one of those cases that the Legislature, in 1989, heard a presentation on how this would be helpful to the cities and they agreed to earmark some cigarette tax for it. Now if you were to put that bill up today, don't know. Probably wouldn't pass in this Legislature. But the nice things for the people with earmarks is they don't have to come back through the appropriation process. It's just there. It's there statutorily. One of the lessons I learned after I got here a few years was that some of the more senior senators know to lock money in the appropriation, or lock it in, in a way, so that you can't get to it, and that's a craft that we learn after we've been here awhile. So there are parts of our budget we can't get to in the appropriations process, and at the beginning of the session we talked about how much of the budget is off limits to appropriations. None of these funds in earlier times