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LB 283

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Pedersen. Senator Kruse, on the Jensen amendment.

SENATOR KRUSE: Thank you, Mr. President and members. I stand in support of the Jensen amendment and wish to speak to the dollars involved. This is not about alcohol. It is about a particular industry that is heavily subsidized by our state. When I referred to the costs before, I'm not talking about social costs. I'm talking about budget dollar, real dollars, real money costs of at least \$300 million a year. At present, we are...the tax equals 5 percent of that. I would never be one to say that it ought to apply to all of it because alcohol abuse is a part of society, but it seems to me the industry needs to be involved. But again, it's not about alcohol. It'd be about any industry that we subsidize to that degree. We are talking about dollars here. If somebody wants to look at cuts and work on cuts, and I assume that would be every "somebody" on this floor, if we're talking about cutting budget, that's what this amendment is about, because it cuts future budgets. If we do not do this, I am fearful of what will happen to future budgets. Mental health is involved. Addiction is involved. Those are connected because mental health that's not treated goes to self-medication, as already been indicated, but that gets very expensive. Person drops out of school and then perhaps ends up at Kearney or York, and worst of all, from terms of dollars, I'm not talking about people here, I'm talking about dollars, worst of all from point of dollars they don't get a job which pays us income taxes and sales tax. We must increase the cost to the funds for treatment. I've talked with numerous people about this and persons that are involved. Our committee has spoken to the Governor about this and the Governor says we must increase treatment funds, we must do that, and has said openly that alcohol tax would be a good way to do that. I think we can all join together on recognizing that this is a way to save future costs. We will have a multiplier effect here that is huge, and in the meantime we have not hurt the consumer. There was some reference to border bleed. I just (laugh) have to smile and keep from laughing out loud. Border bleed on 1.6 cent per can of beer is not going to be very excessive. We are not even doubling the amount of tax on this product, when it has not been increased for 16 years, 16 years. What would be inflation rate