

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

May 13, 2003

LB 407

those were the higher. But there were some other things that were different from what was the lower number that I thought were valuable, that we should do because of Cash Fund problems or other issues that were determined to be appropriate by the Appropriations Committee. We then looked to Corrections, and this is not one that I enjoyed. But obviously, we've got to find money, in my opinion. And I based it on priorities. And obviously, if I'm going to spend the money, in my opinion, for those levels of spending in education, somewhere else has to give. I reduced the jail reimbursement to counties to zero. We move down to public assistance, Medicaid services that provide necessities for the elderly, disabled, and children. I took the Appropriations Committee numbers and made a couple of reductions. One, I put in a 5 percent reduction for administration at the Department of Health and Human Services, both Services and Finance. Two, I eliminated the smoking cessation program from general funding, which is \$3 million of your \$6 million. The other difference that I made with the committee, as far as assistance, is I didn't give the state ward education program the growth that the Appropriations Committee did. I gave them the amount of money that they received under Fiscal Year 2002-2003, which is approximately \$11 million a year, and I took the increase in that dollar and I placed it towards other priorities, such as the direct funding of education. Part of the reason for doing that was, is I believe the Education Committee has made some comments that they believe that there are some opportunities for reform in this area. And instead of giving it a pass, I believe we need to keep some pressure to make some of those reforms. We then move down to another area that I think is important that we haven't accounted for in our budget, and that is the need to spend the money to defend the state's integrity and financial future, which is the litigation we face. I gave the Attorney General's Office approximately the same number that the Appropriations Committee gave them. I did reduce their growth, so it's about half a...it's about \$500,000 less a year, I believe. But I left the intent language about where those dollars should go, because I think it's important as a Legislature that we direct where our funding is being used to defend us in those situations. Finally, we went to general obligations, which I would classify as the general constitutional obligations of the state of