

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

May 13, 2003

LB 407

Governor's recommendation to do this. As you recall, we've been spending \$7 million a year for three years for this. There is a significant interest in this. Many, many young people have come in promoting this. It has proven effective to do something to reduce the use of cigarettes. Our proposal in the committee was to take \$3 million out of the Cash Reserve each year, and that's why the transfer is in the Cash Reserve transfer bill. Our logic was that because we were putting cigarette tax money in the Cash Reserve starting last October, if you remember, we felt it was a logical use for cigarette tax money, i.e., it's still coming out of Cash Reserve. We acknowledge that. But we did feel, based on the information we had, once again, the Governor's encouragement through his bill, that it was important to continue our commitment to smoking cessation, and that long term we would get our money back, in terms of reduced Medicaid costs, if we can get young people to not start. This is the issue. Can't do much about old-timers smoking, perhaps, but if we can encourage young people...or discourage, I should say, discourage young people from starting to smoke, we've come a long way to our future health. That's the reason behind it. Whether it's worth \$3 million a year to you and to your client...your constituents, I guess that's for you to decide. But that's the rationale for it. It's the only money we're putting into it. If you remember the Health Care Trust Fund, which we're using 49 to 50 million a year for that for various reasons, including health units across the state, cancer research, and the list goes on, there's no...there's I don't think any money...if so, there's very little...but I don't believe there's any money going for smoking cessation. So we felt it was important to make a commitment to public health. That's what we've done in this bill. Thank you.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Wehrbein. Senator Jensen, followed by Senators Stuhr, Raikes, Preister, Byars, Connealy, Chambers, Brashear, and Thompson. Senator Jensen.

SENATOR JENSEN: Thank you, Senator Cudaback, members of the Legislature. Senator Brashear, this program has been up, and it is running. If you'll recall, we took...we were part of the group of the states' attorney generals, states, s-t-a-t-e-s, that settled on a Master Settlement Agreement with the tobacco