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FLOOR DEBATE

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the state. To invest \$3 million in a program that shows a reduction in consumptive rate of tobacco smoking by young people, who then are addicted for their life, and until that life prematurely ends, and we the state pick up the health related cost, that process goes on and on and on. And we keep skimming off some of the tax dollars off of those tobacco products, and yet we don't deal with the root cause of tobacco smoking. I think the investment in our young people of \$3 million a year is a wise investment. It's prevention. Prevention is always the most difficult funding to come up with. But in this case, I don't really see this as General Funds. This money already came into the state. We got the tobacco settlement. And Nebraska, as Senator Jensen said, was lauded as not using this money to just balance budgets. It was used in the spirit in which it was given to the states, and that was to deal with health related costs, and especially prevention. Prevention was really the essence of what that tobacco settlement money should have done. And, yes, this money is coming directly from the General Fund, but where did that money get into the General Fund from? It got there from the tobacco settlement. It gets there from the ongoing excise and cigarette tax that we continue to generate year after year. Day after day it goes into the state. I think this is an important program. It has done a lot, no one has disputed, although questions have been raised about whether it was effective. I think it has been effective. And when we have reductions in consumption use by young people, it would say it's effective. And I think the money is already there. This isn't just taking money out of the General Fund, and shouldn't be seen as that. I think the money comes in from both the excise, the cigarette tax, the sales tax, and the tobacco settlement money that was set aside. There are a number of programs that the...if we call it the previous program; I think it's still going on, and I think schools and others are still using the concepts and the programs, and other states are modeling their programs after what we have done. And I think that's healthy and that's good, and that says we did do some things right. Norris Middle School, which is in Senator Jensen's district, just adjoining mine, where many of my constituent students go to school, conducted a consumer advertising campaign which they collected 5,000 signature cards from magazines that accept tobacco advertising, 5,000