

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

May 13, 2003

LB 407

up speed on where we're at. The program has been in existence for three years. We do have empirical evidence at this point of the effect that the program is having. And as the figures are being given to me from the Tobacco Free Nebraska, there's been an 18 percent reduction in kids beginning to use tobacco products. In addition to this, there's been an 11 percent reduction in the use of tobacco products by adults. This is significant. Is it going to amount to the entire 800-plus million dollars that are spent in healthcare costs and lost productivity in the state every year? No. But every kid that we can get to not start using tobacco products, and every person that we can get to stop using tobacco products is going to improve the bottom line in the amount that we spend on healthcare in this state. I think one thing that's important also, that as we talk here about the support of our constituency, I think polling has shown very, very clearly that the citizens of the state of Nebraska, and the numbers that I've been given show that 91 percent of Nebraska voters support Tobacco Free Nebraska prevention programs. That is very, very significant. And as we make the public policy decision, I think we need to be definitely mindful of that situation. If you aren't comfortable with the amount of money that the Appropriations Committee has set aside, taking the dollars out of tobacco generated funds into the Cash Reserve, which I think is significant, we aren't taking away from any tax generated dollars, but if you aren't comfortable with that, I do think...and I see that he has his light on; I'm anxious to hear from Senator Bromm, because I think he has another idea that might have some merit also. But I would definitely stand opposed to the Raikes amendment, and I would ask that you do so also.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Byars. Senator Brashear.

SENATOR BRASHEAR: Mr. President, thank you. Members of the body, I continue to rise in support of the Raikes amendment. I hear many good arguments why we ought to continue this program that has been in existence for three years. And I think we should continue it too. But I think we ought to exercise some discipline about it. Isn't this classic government? We start the program, good program, great objective. We start it three