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LB 407

Senator Raikes, you're recognized to close.

SENATOR RAIKES: Thank you, Mr. President, members. This is a new funding stream for a revised program. I will agree with opponents of this amendment that the program is a good program. It certainly has merit. I would suggest to you that the success claim for the program is probably somewhat clouded. Because at the same time you've had this program, you've had tax increases for tobacco, which I think were passed on the grounds that it would reduce smoking. You've had the Teen Tobacco Program, and several people commented about that program, the advertisements and so on, and I would remind you that's not the program we're talking about. That program has been discontinued. The other thing is, I'm told that the downward trend in tobacco use started in about 1997, which is certainly a good thing, but actually these programs didn't begin until a couple of years later. So it may be that there was some down trend already in place. But nonetheless, I'm not arguing this is not a meritorious program. And in fact, I would not argue that an alternative funding source should or couldn't be...should or...should be considered. I think that's very much a possibility. It's been discussed that the tobacco settlement funds weren't used, and I think, if I heard it correctly, because this is not a high enough priority. Well, I think if this is that important a program, then probably the tobacco settlement fund should be used. I would certainly argue that the LB 692 trust fund should not be violated, that this should not come off the top, as it did originally, but should be used...paid for out of the earnings. But that would certainly be a possibility. This, however, is in effect using General Fund money for this purpose. And at this time, that, in my opinion, is not the appropriate thing to do. Finally, I would mention to you the importance of this. It's \$6 million. It, in my opinion, gets us started in the direction that we need to go in terms of the spending total for this budget biennium that we're working on. So I think this is critically important. I urge your support. Thank you.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Raikes. You've heard the closing on AM1802, offered to LB 407. The question is whether that motion should be adopted. All in favor vote aye, opposed