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FLOOR DEBATE

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LB 759

option to continue the program. And I feel an obligation to offer this funding mechanism. There may be differences of opinion here for sure on whether we should continue the program or whether we shouldn't, and that's for all of us to vote our conscience on that. There is quite a bit of indication, I think, that for probably several reasons we've made some headway in encouraging people to not smoke and not use tobacco to the extent that they have in the past. And for all of us that bodes nothing but good as we continue down the health care, Medicaid, extreme increases in health care costs to the extent that anything helps discourage particularly young people from commencing the habit of smoking, we're going to be much the better off for it, and so will they. So I've handed out kind of a fact sheet to give you some thoughts that probably many of you are aware of. I don't think there is any question but what smoking is harmful. I don't think that's even intro...enters into the debate anymore. The question is, is this program a program that has a good prospect of giving us returns for the investment? And if so, how should we pay for it? I think if we're going to do it, and I think it is worth doing, it ought to be paid for out of the tobacco tax. We've asked the tobacco users and the smokers to pay for a lot of things in this state, and they are going to help us with our General Fund shortage, but I think 3 cents to continue this program makes good sense. And I would like to encourage you to give it serious consideration and, thank you, Mr. President.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Bromm. You've heard the opening on AM1783. It's an amendment to LB 759. Open for discussion, Senator Wehrbein, followed by Senators Bourne, Jensen, Preister, Byars and Beutler. Senator Wehrbein.

SENATOR WEHRBEIN: Yes, Mr. President, and members, I support this, not only because I believe that we should continue funding to some degree this smoking cessation program; technically whether it has quit or whether it hasn't, I'm not clear on that technicality that it has actually quit. But I think that we have at least a moral commitment to try to do something to continue to discourage smoking among people, particularly teenagers. And this is a program that's geared to do that to whatever degree. The second thing that I think we ought to keep