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LB 440, 759

away from various communities from that cigarette tax earmark, and now . . . and you can make a great argument that those went to park developments, they went to community betterments, swimming pools, improvements, things of that nature. The city of Lincoln even bonded a revenue stream or bonded this revenue stream to do some public enhancement there. And yet we got rid of that fund to put in the General Fund, and now what we're being asked to do is to put essentially a 3 cent tax back on cigarettes and, yet, there is no community betterment. It's just for a smoking cessation which I'm struggling with. And quite honestly, earlier this morning I thought very sincerely about trying to stop LB 440 because I've got a list of all the communities and how much money they receive from the MIRF fund and it is not insignificant. And, yet, I thought, well, we need to get through this budget process. We're having a huge crisis. Everybody has to make concessions, give up something, and so I didn't do that. I, like Senator Tyson one time said, you hold your nose and you vote for it. I did that. And, yet, here we're being asked to increase the cigarette tax . . . that we, basically, got rid of this morning. So I'm certainly without . . . with why we should do this and, quite honestly, I'm not going to. I'm going to vote no on this. If you think about it, we increased cigarette taxes on LB 1085 by 30 cents, and we put it into the Cash Reserve Fund to build that up, and we also said that was temporary. The Governor has said that he would support a 20 cent cigarette tax increase and continuing the 30 cents. And, you know, we're still in a state of flux here. It could be when this all shakes out, we're going to look to that additional 20 cents on a pack of cigarettes to solve this problem. We don't know if the Governor, what he is going to veto, what he is going to not veto, what we can override and what we won't. And it could very well be that at the end of the day, at the end of this session, we will need to access that additional 20 cents. I hope not because it's going to be very difficult to support that, too. But what we're being asked to do, and again you can make excellent arguments that this is health related and anything that we can do to keep kids from smoking, they are legitimate arguments, but what we're asking to do is, in a time of crisis, a budget crisis, we're being asked to increase taxes, have an additional earmark, which many of us on this floor have ranted and raved about this session, let's