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LB 572

said LB 672. I want to say LB 692 as the bill that, in effect, created the divvy of the tobacco settlement funds. There was an arrangement made whereby money was taken off the top out of the tobacco settlement monies before it ever went into the trust fund to be distributed, \$7 million a year for three years, and that went into a fund that...I can't remember the name of the fund, but one of the programs within that fund was smoking cessation. There were some other things and maybe part of the money was spent on that. I don't know that. There was, in addition, a teen smoking program that was a part of LB 1436 that, again, was funded for a short time, but it too has ended. But the point is that with the smoking cessation the three years ended last year so that there is no funding in place this year for that program. So for us to allocate money to it now would be, in effect, creating a new program at this state in time, which I suspect is something that a lot of you have concerns about. Now I will say that I am convinced by the arguments presented by those involved in the smoking cessation program. They make the claim that they have been very effective and it seems to me that those claims are true, that they have been effective. My point is that we now collect over...through smoking, if you will, cigarette taxes of 64 cents a pack at about a million dollars a cent or a little over a million dollars a cent, plus the tobacco settlement funds. The state brings in something on the order of 110 or 15 million dollars a year, something like that, related to smoking. It is the job, I think, now for the Legislature to face that squarely and say, okay, we need to relook the allocation of that \$110 million worth of funds. It probably is totally reasonable that part of that money go into programs for smoking cessation, but I don't agree with the notion that, well, gee, we made an arrangement back in the past we're not going to disturb anything so the only way we can fund this program is either to raise cigarette taxes or to take money out of the General Fund. I simply don't think that's appropriate. So I'm not going to support this amendment, even though I am one who, I guess, is certainly convinced by at least some of the arguments of the effectiveness of these programs. I just simply don't think raising the cigarette tax at this time is the right way to get the money. Thank you.

SPEAKER BROMM: Thank you, Senator Raikes. (Visitors