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FLOOR DEBATE

March 19, 2004      LB 1091

SENATOR CUDABACK:      Back to discussion of AM2983 to LB 1091.  
Open for discussion, Senator Kruse.

SENATOR KRUSE:      Mr. President and colleagues, thank you. I want to stand in strong support of Senator Jensen's amendment. Since we've been away from it a little bit, just to remind you that we're talking about the cessation fund. We originally agreed to \$7 million a year, which was half of what was requested. But being typical Nebraskans, we thought we'd be very cautious on it, and we were. We now want to carve out at least \$2.5 million. It should be more than that. Point has already been made. But the competition for it this year is the mental health initiative. That's pushing us for dollars. Otherwise, there could be more in there. However, this is the 2.5. And the amendment makes it a permanent part of our appropriations structure. I would only add to this that this is a commitment we made in LB 692, and in other places. To receive the tobacco settlement funds, we were told we needed to provide cessation funds. We agreed to that. There's nothing written in statute or in blood. But in emotions, we said, yes, that's what we're going to do. And it's time to continue to acknowledge that commitment. Thank you.

SPEAKER BROMM PRESIDING

SPEAKER BROMM:      Thank you, Senator Kruse.      Senator Raikes.

SENATOR RAIKES:      Thank you, Mr. President, members. I'm going to offer you a...my view, Senator Jensen. And I'm going to ask you a question of how all of this sort of came out. I mentioned before that my understanding of the LB 692 arrangement whereby these monies were going to be received in the Tobacco Settlement Fund and then distributed out in such a way that it was actuarially sound and that the monies would be able to fund the designated programs in perpetuity. Now my recollection is that when this began in the late nineties that there was a decision by the Legislature to in effect avoid that arrangement for tobacco cessation monies, and so that there were...there was a bill, as been mentioned, of \$7 million a year to come off of the top and go into tobacco cessation. Now I think that's what was