

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office
FLOOR DEBATE

February 8, 2005 LB 28

now; he was preferring to wait and see how we're doing revenue-wise this year. But, unfortunately, that's only part of the story. The story isn't how we're doing this year. The story is that, as I described yesterday, I'm concerned about the long range of this program because we are talking about taking a minimum of \$4 million, and probably \$5 million or more a year for the next four years out of the revenue of our state, and once you take it out of the revenue of the state, then you no longer have the opportunity to use it for things that I think are very important. When I was giving a talk about being the Chair of the Appropriations, I said I believe that we have several priorities in this state. One is to take care of the needs of our citizens. The second, I think we need to provide for the education of our citizens. And, thirdly, I think we need to provide for economic development so that we have an opportunity for our citizens to develop their lives so that they can have productive business lives. So we need businesses here, so we need all of those things. Now, if you take \$5 million a year out of our budget, that means there are \$5 million less to take care of the basic needs of our citizens. And I know it doesn't sound like a lot of money when you think of the totality of our budget, but it is a lot of money. You remember just two years ago when we were struggling to see that we could provide enough for our K-12 schools and \$5 million would have been a big item at that point. Money is never a big item unless you don't have any, and we've been through that, and I'm afraid that we could go on the path to being in that same situation in the future. So I'm not as concerned about how the dollars are coming in this year. Let's look at the total picture of our revenue in this state. The average of our revenue since 1982, revenue increase has been 5 percent. I described to you yesterday that approximately 50 percent of our budget now is increasing at almost 10 percent a year. Well, you don't have to use much mathematics to see that we don't have much money left in the long run to take care of our basic needs. And although gifts to charities is a very important thing, I can't put that up in the same category that I would put the need to our individuals, the need to our citizens that we're having to pare down even now. We're only able to fund part of what we have been cutting for the last four years. So we've not come out of that. We're getting better revenue, but we still have cut