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FLOOR DEBATE

March 24, 2006 LB 1222

landlines. The amendment says that wireless cell phones, in this case, will also be at a maximum of 50 cents. Be glad to answer any questions about AM2745.

SENATOR CUDABACK: You've heard the opening on AM2745. There are a number of lights on. Senator Smith, you're first, followed by Senator Erdman and six others.

SENATOR SMITH: Thank you, Mr. President and members. I rise in opposition to LB 1222. You might want to take a look at the committee statement. It is somewhat telling, but I have a concern on how we are continuing to ratchet up the fees on cell phones when the fees are already quite high, actually, Alltel Communications. And in light of the issues here in the Legislature with a, quote, unquote, surplus of revenue in the General Fund and there's tax relief and there's other spending issues that have come up, I find it particularly unnecessary to raise fees on a service that is already highly taxed, emphasis highly taxed. And when we look at the evolution of telecommunications over the last hundred years, actually, it becomes even more interesting, because what started out as a luxury tax on telecommunications over a hundred years ago, it's still with us even though a telephone line is no longer considered a luxury. What originally started out with a perception, I guess, of cell phones being a luxury, it's quite different now that cell phones are oftentimes the sole means of communication for an individual. They've gotten rid of their landline perhaps. And I know that there are demands for public safety and other things relating to telecommunications, and I want to be sensitive to that, but I have concerns about raising the fee amidst other budgetary issues that we are facing here in the Legislature or enjoying, if you will, given the surplus. So, again, I rise in opposition to this. I think that if we expect to force consolidation at the local level, we should at least provide a transition period that doesn't seem to exist in there right now. And I also must point out that a lot of these consolidations have started already or are underway, are currently underway. And we aren't quite ready for this bill. Would Senator Baker yield to a question?

SENATOR CUDABACK: Senator Baker, would you yield?