

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
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FLOOR DEBATE

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LB 759

CLERK: Mr. President, Senator Bromm would move to amend with AM1783. (Legislative Journal page 1679.)

SENATOR CUDABACK: Senator Bromm, you're recognized to open on AM1783 to LB 759.

SPEAKER BROMM: Thank you very much, Mr. President. I...several days ago when we were working on budget matters and when we began some discussion about the continuation of the tobacco usage cessation program, and at that time the money that was intended and designated for that purpose by the Appropriations Committee was a transfer from cash reserve. And I expressed concerns about that and I have greater concerns today about that method of funding this program than I had then. I think we're going to see a time when possibly we have severe strain on our cash reserve, maybe some yet before the fiscal year is over. And, certainly, during the next biennium, I'll be surprised if we don't have severe demands upon our cash reserve. So this is a program that is...has been widely supported. The Legislature and this state, to its credit, is one of a handful of states that have actually used tobacco settlement money on health related programs, including tobacco prevention and other health related programs. And I think that is definitely to your credit. However, it seems that in order to continue this program, even at a somewhat reduced level, the money is not available. And when I suggested we not take this money out of the cash reserve, it was suggested to me that perhaps I should at least help think about an alternative way of funding the program. And the only other way, other than upsetting a huge amount of work that's been done by Senator Jensen and others in the tobacco settlement fund that I knew of, and it made sense and logic to me, was to add 3 cents to the tobacco, the increase in cigarette tax, going from 30 to 33 cents in order to fund this program the next couple of years. It's...it would be earmarked for that purpose and that purpose only. And so that is the purpose of the amendment. Now since that discussion on the Cash Reserve Fund, in all fairness, Senator Raikes offered an amendment to take the program funding out of the mainline budget bill, which was adopted, and during the debate on that bill, I know that the possibility of doing this was mentioned. And I feel...I certainly feel like this should be offered as an