

in our state. I'm not a smoker, but I notice some of them around me are. But it doesn't bother me. I like to see them puff away and raise some taxes for us. I think we can go too far with this. What we are doing here, we are penalizing the cigarette smokers. I think that all of us need to share the burden of the poor economy that we have in our state, not just the cigarette smokers. I think that we'll accomplish this by cutting back in our spending, not increasing our spending. Some of you in the body think that we need to tax and spend, tax and spend. Well, this certainly I don't think is the answer to our problems. I think we have to be more frugal, we have to become more efficient in state government and then take it from there. So I would urge you to defeat the Marsh amendment to increase the cigarette tax two cents a package.

SPEAKER NICHOL: Senator Marsh, then Senator Schmit.

SENATOR MARSH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we are talking about the states that already have a higher tax we are talking about Maine, Oregon, Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Wisconsin, Kansas, Rhode Island, Minnesota, South Dakota and Washington who have 23 cents or more on their cigarette pack. Ours is at 17. We continue to name other states if we stay where we are. Senator Hefner is saying that it is disastrous if this amendment were adopted. On the contrary, smoking is disastrous in many, many instances. Don't you know any of the people who have lung cancer or emphysema or heart conditions? I do. Maybe people will think the taxes are too high and stop smoking. That certainly would be a good social policy. That certainly would be a benefit to the State of Nebraska. Senator Hefner is talking about lowering even the proposal that is currently before us. I'm talking about raising it. Certainly, if you do not accept the amendment, the Marsh amendment, do not allow it to be lowered. I expect we are really not surprised that there is an attempt to do just that. I think we saw it coming. The Marsh amendment would leave the wholesalers' commission at three percent, which is currently in LB 3. I'm sure there probably will be forthcoming, in short order, an attempt to leave it where it is. What is our responsibility in this body? To the tobacco lobby? No. Our responsibility is to the citizens of the State of Nebraska. Senator DeCamp is well aware, even though he did not acknowledge it on the floor, that the social policy of the state is not to encourage smoking, it