

budgetwise, having the funds available also in the future to maintain that facility. We can't afford to let the \$66 million commitment, up through '95, continue to escalate. And because of that I offer this amendment, but also listening to the Chairman of the committee indicate how they are also concerned, and because I know there are absent from the floor other senators who have amendments that would also recommit and, in fact, establish new cigarette taxes, and because I know of the importance of some people, especially with cancer research, who have concerns about how these dollars should be spent. And I hope...I didn't have a chance to talk to the rest of the members of the committee, they would not...they would agree that...that after discussing what the purpose of the amendment is, what I think we should do and how we should accomplish it, it's obvious that it's premature for us, in my opinion at least, to suggest that we make this commitment this early. And so to explain it on General File is important. It's an amendment that would need 25 votes in any case. I think it's in all of our best interest that I withdraw the amendment at this time until Select File, and until that time when we have a better understanding about this kind of tax, where it should go, the priorities for it. And in the meantime talk also about future commitments on capital construction. So, I would hope that meets with the approval of the committee. I apologize for not having a chance at this late date, late moment in the hearings to talk with you about it. I would respectfully withdraw this amendment at this time.

SPEAKER BAACK: It is withdrawn. Discussion on the bill itself. Senator Wesely.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, members, I rise in support of the bill. I think there's a lot of reasons to support passage of the bill. Obviously, Senator Warner has raised the key one, that we need the revenue to help balance the budget, that's why we have the bill before us. But there are other good reasons why raising the cigarette tax makes sense. One of the most important ones is obviously health concerns. I have, over the years, been very concerned about what we're doing in terms of health care in this state and how we can cut the costs of health care. A study done in 1988 indicates, and I'll quote, every year thousands die or are hospitalized as a direct result of their smoking. The economic costs are conservatively estimated to range between \$336 and \$601 a year per smoker, billions of dollars annually absorbed by insurers and the health