

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

February 21, 2002 LR 6

SENATOR BEUTLER: Senator Cudaback, members of the Legislature, what is attempted to be presented to you through this amendment is a very limited and controlled form of casino gambling. Some of us have been in the Legislature for a long, long time; some for a number of years; some of us are brand new. But those of us who have been here for awhile know that this Legislature, historically, continually and consistently has been anti casino gambling. That's the starting point and I think nobody can deny that that is still the basic strong majority feeling in this body. But, at the same time, we have become cognizant of the fact that we cannot keep casino gambling out of Nebraska; that our people are flooding over to the casinos in Council Bluffs and that it no longer makes any public policy sense to simply flat out say no casinos. And I will give you the revenue figures later. I will give you the other economic arguments later. They're all there. Economic benefit is being drained big time from the state of Nebraska. So what we're trying to do is to present a limited form of this that can honestly say to people whose philosophies are we don't want to expand this form of gambling, that can honestly say to them we are not doing that. We're putting the casinos in the two-mile strip. It doesn't improve any Nebraskans' access to casinos unless you want to count one or two miles as being more access. And, furthermore, it's limited in time. If the Iowa casinos disappear, our casinos disappear. There are some in the Legislature who would like to have it wide open. Most of us would like to have nothing at all. But we're pleading with you to be commonsensical and to be practical and to accept a limited form of casino gambling because it's...because it's the best that we can now make of the situation. There is a reality out there. We need to deal with it. That reality then, the intensity of it, is magnified and accelerated by the fact that you have two initiatives that are gathering signatures and probably will be before the state of Nebraska, neither of which allow this Legislature any appreciable measure of control over the gambling that's suggested in those initiatives, one of which is essentially a casino proposition because it allows, in the Omaha, Douglas County, Sarpy metropolitan area, it allows as many slot machines in one facility as local government determines is reasonable, so it opens it up so that anybody in that area can plead with local government to establish a casino