

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

April 3, 2002 LR 6

ballot? Well, the Legislature might not have that ability because it might be there whether we want it to be there or not. And I feel that if we do have it on the ballot and it is on the ballot, the Legislature needs to have an option. We at least need to have a game plan that we approve rather than the plan the petition approves because we might have more gambling than we want, and we need to make sure that we are in control of that, whether it's voted in or it was voted out, we need to have a plan. Thank you.

SPEAKER KRISTENSEN: Senator Schimek.

SENATOR SCHIMEK: Yes, thank you, Mr. President and members. One of the things that I keep hearing is that we are a representative democracy and we need to make the decisions and we shouldn't pass it on to the people to make the decisions. But let me remind you that we are talking about amending the Constitution here. So if there is to be a decision in that regard, you have to go to a vote of the people. That's not really the question. The question is whether we think that it should go on the ballot or not. Inevitably it will go to a vote of the people. There have been a lot of statistics bandied about here this morning, and you and I all know that statistics are statistics. And they come from a variety of different sources and you can find statistics to make your point, no matter which side of which issue that you are on. But I would like to offer you some, I think, thoughtful statistics that are done by some reputable, impartial kinds of groups. And the first one...and I'm going to continue these as we go through the discussion of the bill...but, myth number one: the expansion of legalized gambling has led to a disproportionate increase in the number of problem gamblers. Fact: opponents of gambling argue that the increased availability of gambling, easier access to funds, and expanded hours of operation leads to more addicted gamblers. While this might seem to be a logical assumption, it is not accurate. Consider that the first federal commission on gambling was formed back in the 1970's. Then, it concluded the number of compulsive gamblers was 0.77 percent of the U.S. adult population. Despite gambling's widespread expansion since that time, the estimate from the 1970's is virtually identical to the findings reported by the National Research Council of the