

introduced and I was a critic of the first two or three proposals brought back to us by the Ak-Sar-Ben group. Finally, at the very end, it did seem to me that a case had been made that Ak-Sar-Ben was in need of some assistance, that the other tracks as well benefited by the package, that it was good for the horse-racing industry in this state and that this major tourist attraction needed a reduction in its tax to continue to operate, to continue to improve and to retain a competitive place in the marketplace of gambling that's developing in the Middle West. I support the committee amendments as originally adopted and oppose the Chambers amendment.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Thank you. Senator Peterson, on the Chambers amendment. Thank you. Senator Labeledz. Senator Rod Johnson.

SENATOR R. JOHNSON: Mr. President and members, I oppose the Chambers amendment and would support the committee amendments as presented by Senator Hall. You know, the horse-racing industry is a multimillion dollar industry and rather than beat around the bush I will get right to the point. Senator Schmit has often referred to a senator who said that this horse-racing industry is not a gambling industry, it's an agricultural industry. Well, that was my statement about five years ago and, quite frankly, it is an industry that we depend upon. I have a number of horse breeders in my district, a number of folks who raise horses for the thoroughbred industry and they do consume a lot of oats, and corn, and grain, and alfalfa, and straw and that is important to us in the production agricultural area. I will be honest with you, if you could make a video slot machine or a pickle card machine that it can...I can stuff alfalfa or oats into, I would probably support that industry just as much. But, but it is important, both from the tourism standpoint and the agriculture standpoint. It makes a big impact, just ask the folks in Grand Island right now as the Fonner Park season is going on right at this moment and the impact of dollars that that industry brings, not just to the track but to the communities in which they're located, where those tracks are at. And so if we can do something to help the industry survive, even though we realize it's having its tough time of surviving, if we can do something to help them, I think it benefits the entire state. So I would oppose Ernie's amendment and support the original committee amendment.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Senator Hall, please, on the Chambers amendment.