

SPEAKER BAACK: Discussion on the Smith amendment. Senator Hall.

SENATOR HALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and members, as I rise in opposition to "Reverend" Smith's amendment to the proposal, the issue is clearly one of what should we do in terms of a constitutional amendment that is presented to the voters. The Constitution is a grant of powers. It allows us to basically have parameters that we can work with, things that we can do. When we amend that, the amendments should be, in my opinion, as broad as possible, I would think, so that they would allow the Legislature then, once given the authority to deal with the subject matter, to create its own parameters within which to work. And it's not news to the body that I believe that we ought to be in the gambling business. We are in the gambling business, I just think we ought to expand it so we make a little money at it. We've gone about it in an approach to let everyone else reap benefits from it. We will establish structures within the Department of Revenue for regulation and oversight and collect very little benefit from that. We collect tax but the tax amounts to very little when you look at the overall amounts of money that are wagered and those that are then spent by charitable organizations or the parimutuel wagering enterprise as we currently allow in statute in the Constitution as well as in the State of Nebraska. I do not believe that limiting this type of a lottery through Senator Smith's amendment in the Constitution is good public policy. Frankly, it's not news to anyone here that by introducing the proposal that follows LR 24, I think it's LB 849, should that become law, should the voters adopt LR 24, should the 849 become law, when that all gets on line Nebraska is still going to be 10 years behind the curve in terms of where the industry is at. That's not news to anybody. Machines are currently operating in South Dakota. Riverboat gambling, casino gambling is on the table. Railroad gambling is being conducted in Iowa. Casino gambling is going to probably take place in Iowa in the next year or so. We have high stakes, bingo games that are being conducted in the state to the east. We're surrounded by states, except Wyoming, that currently have lotteries that are in place. I don't oppose the lottery proposal per se, the ticket lottery, but to go about and exclude ourselves from ever looking at something else other than that down the road I think is very narrow-sighted, very short-sighted and would be poor public policy. The arguments that Senator Smith makes with regard to the issue of the poll, the poll was taken by individuals who are in the lobby right now that are