

Legislative Journal.) 20 ayes, 5 nays on the adoption of committee amendments, Mr. President.

SPEAKER WITHEM: The committee amendments are not adopted. Senator Will, you'd be recognized to open on the bill. Call would be raised.

SENATOR WILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and members of the body. With the failure to adopt the committee amendment, frankly, the bill's in the shape that I introduced it, which makes it a substantial revenue raiser because it increases the tax on keno from 2 percent to 3 percent, which is a much larger revenue source than bingo. So I suppose we'll go from there. In general, though, in general terms, my purpose behind introducing this bill is to reduce the tax on our charitable bingo games in the state of Nebraska. You have a couple of handouts on your desk from the annual report from the Charitable Gaming Division of the Department of Revenue that, one of which describes the bingo game revenue and how it has declined over the last two years, and I think primarily that can be ascribed to two things, number one is the proliferation of keno, and number two is the advent of other gambling opportunities in adjacent states. The second handout details the organizations participating in gaming activities. And as you can see, they are, except for cities, they are all private...or nonprofit organizations that are tax exempt under IRS 501(c) categories. So in my argument, this is the same speech I give every year about this time, is that the fact is we tax all of our gaming activities, which is fair, but what is not fair is that we tax bingo at 8 percent of gross while all other forms of gaming activities are ranged from zero to 3 percent of gross, zero being some horse racing activities that fall underneath the statutory exempt limit. That 8 percent tax on gross places us, on bingo, places us among the very highest in the nation. At one time we were the highest. I don't have figures from the last year, but when I introduced this bill I believe we were the highest taxing entity in the nation as far as bingo games go. And remember, bear in mind at all times that these are funds that go for charitable activities. They're limited by statute to go for charitable activities. So we're talking about entities like Catholic churches, VFWs, any other charitable entity that can go out and get a gaming license. It's very strictly regulated by the Department of Revenue. It's an activity that simply goes to benefit the citizens of the state of Nebraska, and to a very