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April 14, 1999 LB 791

SENATOR LANDIS: Thank you, Madam President, members of the Legislature. LB 791 is a reneging on a bargain that was made a number of years ago, before many of you were here. And it was a bargain made with the public and with the Legislature. And it was a bargain that, basically, came about in this way--pro lottery forces got a very slipshod lottery onto the ballot, and the press and a number of positive forces said, look, that lottery bill is too porous, it doesn't have any controls, defeat it and the conditions are such that we will pass a state lottery. And the Legislature, basically, made that sort of a bargain with the state and said, look, we've been fighting on the lottery, obviously it's a positive thing, kill this really phony-baloney lottery, and we'll create another lottery, and it will be tightly controlled. And the public did it. They killed a really phony-baloney lottery. We passed the state lottery and we put it to good effect, and we put the money where we had told the public that we were going to put it; it's going to go into education, and it was going to go into natural resources. And at the time we said...we heard the arguments, you know, the lottery will start going down, and when that happens you're going to have the Governor on television with the winners, you're going to have encouraging lottery...you're going to get government in the business of promoting the lottery. And the answer came back, said, no, we aren't, no, we aren't. We're just responding to the public's desire to gamble by creating a lottery that's going to have some positive public benefits. LB 791 is the beginning of that, wait a second, how can we squeeze this for more? How can we...how can we get more people to play? How can we sell more tickets? The state needs to encourage gambling, not just give the opportunity, but to encourage it. We need to change the rules. The rules that we have, which we gave to the public, which we had as part of a public debate on this floor and in the ballot box, need to be changed, because we don't have enough gamblers out there; we have to appeal to them. We have to change the game. Gambling is not such a social good that the Legislature ought to change the rules of the game to make it more attractive, so we can sell more tickets, so people can buy more with their disposable income in this business. This is a reneging on where we were. It is the first situation in which we are saying, uh-uh, that lottery, oooh, it's a money-maker, we need more money, we need