

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

February 27, 2003 LR 14

alive. Interestingly enough, the last year that Ak-Sar-Ben ran a full slate of races...and I don't know the date...the wagering was down. But there was more money wagered at Horsemen's Park the last year than the last year of racing at Ak-Sar-Ben. So the actual wagering on horse races in Omaha has gone up, even though Ak-Sar-Ben has closed. Fonner Park has done quite well. I think one of the reasons is because they are quite a distance from the casinos. And Columbus has survived. They have quite a meet here in Lincoln also. Racetracks, horse racing tracks, are agricultural societies, and the money profited by those agricultural societies stay in the area, stay in the community. And you know, if you're a farmer, horses eat hay, they eat grain. It takes a sizeable amount of money to raise horses. I, at one time, about 20 years ago, was intrigued by the thought of maybe owning a racehorse, till I got into it a little deeper and I thought, no, I've got enough problems. But the breeding industry is substantial, was substantial in this state. We're running up against competition in Iowa on horse racing now, because the facility there in Des Moines does offer horse racing, and they have better purses than we do. So...and the purses they have better because they have slots to support their horse racing. I would like to see any expansion in gambling in the state of Nebraska include our racetracks. They are ready to go. We know where the sites are. You're not starting a new industry; you're supporting an industry that we have. I think we would see a resurgence in our breeding industry in this state. It gives a chance for central Nebraska to have a location, that being Fonner Park, that being Columbus. They're already there. They already have their management. They could be up and running in a short period of time after the constitutional amendment, presumably, would be passed and voted upon. It makes a lot of sense. And this may come as a shock to you, but people go to horse races to gamble, and this just offers another opportunity for that to take place. And you know, where I'm from, you're about a three-hour drive, three-and-a-half-hour drive from the closest casino. And you know, depending on who you listen to, you can either be for gambling or opposed to gambling. I, quite frankly, don't care if a constitutional amendment passes or fails. I just think we ought to put something reasonable on the ballot for people to vote on, and I think anything reasonable would include our