

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

March 5, 2003

LR 11

said that access breeds consumption. Seems to me that we are really cutting off our leg just so that our foot won't hurt. We already have the problems, another argument, so let's get some of the revenues. We can't expand gambling without having more problems. And I think all of us would agree with that. We've talked about many, not only of the social costs, the bankruptcies, the foreclosures, the impact on local businesses. We really haven't talked about addiction. And I just want to spend a few minutes talking about that, from some of the information that I've received. We know, from Health and Human Service Office of Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Addiction Services, that there are over 40,000 gambling addicts in Nebraska now. If we put casinos across the state, that number will grow. Let's just say we're dealing with 40,000. What can we do for them? The best gambling addiction treatment service costs from \$10,000 to \$15,000 per addict. Even then, as few as 50 percent actually find relief. So if we budget, say, \$10,000 per addict, times 40,000 addicts, we would need \$400 million just for treatment costs. And in the end, we'll still have 20,000 addicts. So, you know, we keep talking about, no, it's not the revenues. But I think that it certainly is going to cause many, many problems that none of us are aware of. I think we need to be clear with our constituents. Maybe we need to ask them, if you knew that Nebraska casinos could cause more money to leave the state than is leaving now, what and how would you vote? If you knew that casino revenues would not help the budget deficit or lower taxes, how would you vote? And if you know that the costs would far outweigh the benefits, would you still want this issue put before a public debate, where hundreds and hundreds and thousands of dollars are going to be spent when this issue is put on the ballot? Thank you.

SENATOR HARTNETT: Thank you, Senator Stuhr. Senator Erdman, followed by Janssen, Smith, Schimek, Kremer, Tyson, Vrtiska.

SENATOR ERDMAN: Thank you, Senator Hartnett, members of the Legislature. I wanted to continue the discussion that Senator Stuhr brought up, because I think it does bring us to the point we're actually doing our job, I believe, and that is making a determination of the valid merits or lack of merits on a proposal, based on all the sides of the issue. And I think that