

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

April 2, 2003

LR 11

specifically at the last sentence of the amendment that is before us. And it brings us right to the heart of my basic concern with this whole issue. The people do have a right to choose their activities. I know that there are people who are addicted to gambling activities. They already live in Nebraska. They already have venues where they can actually participate in these activities. But the one thing we don't have in the state of Nebraska is the Legislature sticking its fingers in the pot and pulling out the proceeds from casino income. Yes, we do have a lottery, and I don't agree with that either. But we're looking at an addictive behavior on the part of the Legislature, which we have seen sweep the country. We have seen state after state succumb to the addiction of dollars generated by an activity that they know is not economically sound for their people or for their businesses, but they can't let go. They can't let go because they're addicted to the dollars that it brings into the state's coffers. And therein lies the biggest problem in the whole issue before us. It isn't the people's addiction; it is the lawmakers' addiction. It is government's addiction to dollars to spend however they would like, and that's what we see in the last sentence there. Now we had an initiative that was proposed by the people. They do have that right. I support that right. I'm not afraid of that right. And they wanted to put an issue on the ballot that said we're going to have these dollars, or this activity, on main street, in your corner bar, and we're going to keep the dollars and we're going to keep those dollars here on main street where they will be spent in Nebraska. And the Legislature said, oh, no, this is terrible. And I have to admit, it was with fear and trepidation that I looked at the wording of that initiative. But at the same time, I had to recognize that at least those dollars were going to stay on main street. They weren't going to go off to Nevada. They were going to stay in Nebraska. That's not necessarily bad. Now we want to put a petition on there because we want our hands in the pie, because we want the money, because somehow we think we can spend it better. Paternalism? You bet. We think we can regulate it better. Paternalism? You bet. This is the heart of the issue. Will we create a situation where the state of Nebraska is so addicted to these dollars that we can never loosen our grip and let go? Thank you.