

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

May 6, 2003

LB 283

small indication of why we do this. Currently, 65 to 85 percent of our inmates need substance abuse treatment. Sixty-six percent of parole revocations are drug and alcohol related, 66 percent. Almost one-fourth of the admissions to the Nebraska prisons in 2000, one-fourth, were for drug abuse or drug offenses. It is estimated that 65 to 85 percent of the juvenile offenders in youth rehabilitation and treatment centers need substance abuse treatment. The social, emotional and financial costs of substance abuse are high, and I'm sure that you are all aware of the impact of substance abuse has on our budget. I am here to appeal to the body to take a bold step and devote the money raised from alcohol tax increase to a Substance Abuse Treatment Fund. This amendment raises the tax on alcohol beverages by a very small amount and devotes those funds to a Substance Abuse Treatment Fund. Some people may say that the tax increase is extraordinarily high. We've heard that already. However, the tax on alcohol has not been raised since 1987, and if you look at the sheet I handed out you'll see that the actual amount of the increase is small. According to the sheet, you will see that if you drink a can of beer every day for an entire year you will pay \$6.16 due to this tax increase. If you drink a case of beer every day for an entire year, you will pay \$147.83 more at the end of the year because of this tax increase. If you drink a glass of wine a day for the entire year, you will only pay an extra \$10.27 at the end of the year. I have had people contact my office who said these amounts will be overwhelming to the industry and that jobs will be lost. However, you must ask yourself if you believe that paying an extra \$6.16 a year for a can a beer a night will reduce consumption and result in job loss. I assert to the body that this amendment will not, under any circumstance, reduce consumption and that is not the intent. The intent is to recover some of the cost to the state due to substance abuse and those who consume alcohol beverages. Right now, in our short-term inpatient treatment facilities, you have to be placed on a 90-day waiting list to receive treatment. On our Native American reservations, alcohol abuse is near epidemic proportions, and we have all been hearing how our prisons are overcrowded and that we do not...if we do not do something about it we'll be forced to build more prisons. Now, the industry will tell you that not all of the problems you hear about are