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FLOOR DEBATE

February 20, 2004 LR 14

SENATOR CUDABACK: Senator Smith, to open on AM2670 to LR 14CA.
Senator Smith.

SENATOR SMITH: Thank you, Mr. President and members. I rise to introduce AM2670, and I'll read it again: "The registered voters of a county in which a casino location is authorized shall, after such casino location has been in existence for five years, approve or disapprove the continued presence of such casino location within the county." The last vote, I have to say that I...I'm not disappointed that it failed because it would have made LR 14CA a better bill and ultimately more palatable, probably both to the body and to the voters, but I have to say that it rings a bit hollow when I heard comments that, yes, we want to do this, but I don't like the language of this amendment, that being the prior amendment. There was the opportunity to amend that and there were no amendments filed, so I have a hard time understanding that it is...it seemed to be the will of the body to accomplish this issue of local voter approval, but the opportunity was not exercised so as to get more clarifying language for the purposes of members, such as Senator Schimek. Certainly I have my own ideas and I'm willing to tweak some of the language here, even if it does make LR 14CA a better bill. But now the discussion centers on the five-year renewal, and I believe Iowa has a similar situation and Council Bluffs, yes, they renewed theirs or the county renewed theirs, over the reluctance of several folks, it's my understanding. And even as well as, some folks have said, Council Bluffs has done, I would argue the Omaha has done even better without gambling revenue. And let's just assume that these millions of dollars are flowing over to Council Bluffs. Omaha has still done well. The riverfront is a great place, new development. Someone was telling me that up until just a couple two, three years ago, the only folks who could get to the riverfront were the bums who slept under the bridge. And it didn't take casinos to build the high-rise First National Bank Building, the Gallup headquarters, the National Park Headquarters. Now we see even more private dollars going to residential development on the riverfront. I think that's great. Footbridge certainly won't be state dollars. Some would argue whether those are dollars well-spent, but nonetheless they're coming to Nebraska. So be