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FLOOR DEBATE

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LR 209

The buildings at the State Fair have significant problems. They range from ADA deficiencies, code violations, deferred maintenance on leaky roofs, or poor energy management, this against a state economy that has been weak in the last couple of years. In response to the slowdown, the State Fair has made budget cuts, significant ones that may have hurt the gate receipts and the ticket sales. So there may be a spiraling effect from those budget cuts. An option is to cease doing business after 135 years of an illustrious history. An alternative would be to declare bankruptcy and try to get court approval for a viable reorganization plan under protection. But what the board hopes to do is to renegotiate its position in the marketplace and with the state of Nebraska to draw upon the affection and loyalty that this state has and to chart a new course that has a spine of continued regular stable financing to the tune of 2 million plus dollars per year from the lottery, to leverage that sum and to use that leverage for the refurbishment of buildings and the revitalization of programming. It is possible that those of us who believe in the State Fair and support it do not have the public's support in this agenda. I personally believe that we do, but that is a matter of opinion. By choosing the methodology of LR 209CA, we take away from the realm of possibility and conjecture and place squarely in the realm of certainty the answer to the question, does the public want to support the continuation of the State Fair? What LR 209CA contemplates is a vote of the people on a constitutional amendment, and that will serve as a referendum, a referendum on the continued existence and stability of this noble tradition in the state. And the public may, in their wisdom, say to themselves we have the Qwest Center, we have Husker Days, we have MTV, we have many sources of entertainment and education, this is a relic, an antique, and it's time to retire this tradition and to remember it fondly but to leave it behind us. That is a possibility. In the alternative, this body would defer to the public the final decision on whether or not the public wants to support the State Fair because the other alternative, the one that I believe in and the one that I hope is true, is the public saying whether or not we come down, whether or not we attend the special programming or choose to embrace horse racing, we support the continuation of the State Fair. We want it to flourish. We want State Fair Park to be a