

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

April 7, 2004

LR 11

as the evil empire, as some gambling establishment has been referred to here. Quite the contrary. Fonner Park is what we consider one of our finest community partners in our city. Over the years, their contributions have been tremendous to our city. Their donations alone to different nonprofits include the Humane Society, Crimestoppers, the Chamber of Commerce, Family Violence Coalition, Oasis Water Park, new soccer fields and softball fields, the Red Cross, and most recently, the Third City Community Clinic. They offer their facilities to all these agencies, at no cost, and they do it willingly. And you know, the city is able to raise a lot of money. In addition, they've contributed many contributions, over \$3 million over the years, an aggregate of quite a period of time. This is their fiftieth anniversary this year. And it's the one remaining horse track in the state of Nebraska that's kept its head above water. And you know, we're very proud of it. And they do so because our community supports it. And our community would not be afraid to have a casino, or gambling, or slots, anywhere then. We would like an opportunity to compete. We consider what we have there as an economic development driver, and slots would only add to that. And we know the good that can come of it, simply because Fonner Park is a nonprofit itself, and I think that's the best opportunity for people to control gaming. The horse racing industry in Nebraska is a \$200 million industry, with deep ties to the agriculture economy. And I think that's what bothers me. Because I did a survey earlier, trying to find out...I did all my homework, trying to find out how many votes I could get for this proposal, and was quite disappointed by the number...by the count. When you think of all the ag-related senators we have here who are not willing to help, you know, I could only tell them about the amount of farm equipment that goes through that place every year, about the amount of hay, oats, horse feed. It's amazing how that supports ag throughout Nebraska. There's also the outstate coalition of senators that didn't want to help on this issue. That's a little disappointing. Ever since I've come down here, I've always said, you know, the way you get things done is you build coalitions, and you try to keep as many things--and I'm going to be open about this and just say, keep as many things from going to Omaha as possible. And here we want to give Omaha a free ride. That's the only city that's been talked about as far as having a casino. Well, there are