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FLOOR DEBATE

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LB 332

has had quite a ride--the intent of the original bill, the committee amendment, and my amendment to the...to provide an additional funding for problem gambling services in Nebraska. The need for problem gambling services in our state continues to grow. Over 41,000 Nebraska adults experience problem gambling behaviors each year. It is estimated that problem gambling costs society over \$212 million in social costs to the state if left untreated. Adolescent gambling rates are two to four times that of adults. Twenty-six thousand teens and preteens took the Nebraska Risk and Protective Factor Survey this year. The survey compiles statistics on drug and alcohol abuse, and gambling among school-age children. Fifty percent of the students surveyed, they reported that they had gambled; and of the students that have gambled, over 32 percent reported that they had gambled over the past year for money or something of value. Fifteen percent of the students that gambled had done so in the last 30 days preceding the survey. Seventeen percent of the students that had gambled said that they have been preoccupied by their gambling behaviors. Five percent of the students that have gambled reported they had spent more than they intended. Research shows that a full menu of problem gambling services that are easy to find reduces the incidence of problem gambling regardless of the availability of gambling opportunities. Problem gambling is a growing public health issue in our state. The request for problem gambling services is growing at an alarming rate. The gambling assistance program is accomplishing great and amazing things. Even though they only have one and a half full-time employee, they have established a toll-free help line that fields over 225 calls per month, 225 calls per month. They contract for outside services with 4 providers and 21 individual counselors across the state. Those counselors provided professional counseling and assessment for more than 820 individuals last year. The gamblers assistance program trains and certifies compulsive gambling counselors. The GAP staff and the providers made 151 presentations to raise awareness of problem gambling last year, but there's an unmet need. In the year 2004, providers documented 550 hours of unbilled services. More than half of the providers delivered services beyond their contracted amounts. Requests for services this year are up approximately 28 percent over last year. There isn't any extensive promotion