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FLOOR DEBATE

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LB 332

the opening on the McDonald amendment, AM1656, to the committee amendments to LB 332. Open for discussion. Senator Dwite Pedersen, followed by Senator Don Pederson and others. Senator Dwite Pedersen.

SENATOR Dw. PEDERSEN: Thank you, Mr. President, members of the Legislature. What Senator McDonald is saying is far more serious than I believe most of you believe. The problem we have in this state with compulsive gambling is equal to the problem we're having with methamphetamines. Because it does not lay somebody out on the morgue table does not mean that it does not fillet them out in their personal lives. We have seriously misfunded this program and we need to reach out and do something with these people who will not get help if we do not help them. The statement I hear most of all--if they got money to gamble, they got money to get well--that money they use to gamble is money that they're taking away from their children, their families, and their own well-being. I am not a gambling counselor. I have chose not to get certified in that field about three years ago because I was not able to ever help any of the gambling people that came...people that had gambling problems in my outpatient treatment program, because they needed far more help and experience, specialized help, than I could give them. It is breaking our state, which is nothing compared to what it's doing morally, spiritually, and personally to these people and to us. It has not been and probably won't be. I'll be in here with legislation next year to see if we can't get the Department of Health and Human Services to take this a little more seriously, especially in the area of addictions--alcohol, drugs, and compulsive gambling, and other addictions--because we have to do something in all them areas, a lot more than what we are. One area that we don't do anything with that's going to come up more and more in the future is what we're going to do to work with these sexual offenders and their problems and addictions, because we keep locking them up, especially in our state hospitals, and we don't have near enough treatment for them. We're not locking up in the mental hospitals many of our gambling people, but we have a lot of them people, gambling addictions, that are cross-addicted with alcohol and drugs and other problems. Please listen carefully to this debate as it moves forward on LB 332 and Senator McDonald and Senator