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LB 152

was complaining about yesterday and what it will do is it will increase the penalties for a Class I gambling offense, gambling in the first degree, from a misdemeanor which carries a maximum of a fine of \$1,000 or imprisonment of one year to a Class IV felony the way it was originally recommended out by the committee which carries one to five years and a maximum fine of \$10,000. Now I really feel very strongly that we should adopt this amendment. The bill as currently written will permit bookmaking in excess of \$1,000 a day, any amount in excess of \$1,000 a day only a misdemeanor and it will also permit receiving from any gambling scheme of amounts of more than \$1,000 a day only a misdemeanor. Now I really see no harm at all in making these offenses felonies. If this change is not made why essentially any kind of bookmaking scheme, no matter how large or how much money is taken in per day, will be only a misdemeanor offense. Now the dispute seems to be whether or not this is going to encourage or discourage organized crime from coming into Nebraska and the rationale seems to be that, I have heard from several different people on the floor, seems to be that if we lower this offense to a misdemeanor offense why then it will put the local bookmakers back into operation and it is going to discourage organized crime from coming into Nebraska. Now I just have difficulty buying that. I think in Kansas City in recent years there is, organized crime has moved in and there have been a lot of incidents of violence down in one of the restaurant-night club areas in Kansas City that I know we don't want to see repeated in Nebraska. Recently the gambling laws in Iowa were liberalized and I know there have been a lot of incidents and Senator Murphy has told me about one that have occurred in Iowa that I don't think we want to see repeated in Nebraska. I think the argument that by lowering bookmaking to a misdemeanor on all circumstances, we are going to keep organized crime out and encourage the local bookmakers probably is a bogus argument. I mean it seems to me if we want to make a policy decision we are going to discourage big time gambling, if we are going to make a policy decision that bookmaking is bad, why we ought to make it a felony offense. By making it a felony offense it is a serious crime. By making it a felony offense we are warning the big time, the organized crime gamblers away as well as the small time people and I just really don't see any rationale. I really don't see how lowering it to a misdemeanor is really going to help us keep organized crime out. I think, in fact, if we lower it to a misdemeanor is simply going to invite organized crime to come in all the more. If this amendment is adopted I could support the bill. If this amendment is not, I could not. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.