

SENATOR NELSON: Mr. President, members of the body, I, too, have to rise in support of Senator Conway's bill. I do come from Grand Island and I will have to say I'm not as familiar with the racing industry or business as I should be, but I have been educated in the last few weeks and so on. This is a very big business in our area, so to speak, for a couple of months. I can give you a little bit of statistics and I don't know whether I want to give it to you or I want to withhold it from you. It may be you can take it two ways, maybe obviously see that the tax will not be 5 percent, but I will give you the figures that I have received from Fonner Park so far this year. The first day their handle was down 9.1 percent, attendance down 10 percent. The second day, February 21, down 8.3 in attendance and 5.6 in the handle. The next day 5.1 in attendance, 5.6 in handle. The first day that the dog tracks opened the attendance was down 15.1 and the handle down 21.3. The next, 13.9, handle down 8.9. The next day 5.6 and the handle down 9.6, for a total reduction in attendance of 8.6 this year and the handle down 9.4. In all the average handle amounts to 12.2 percent down so far this year from last year and we have had in most all cases very good weather for racing. What Fonner Park is facing is in 1988 during the same time that Fonner Park will be racing Oklahoma City I understand is to open a track with \$100,000 purse compared to Fonner Park's \$30,000 purse. So you can see how it will affect probably Fonner Park. I also stand to be corrected on this, but from my mind I recall that Fonner Park had 404 different activities out there last year, nearly every day of the year excepting the two months when the races are held. We have a very fine Hall County Fair and entertainment that brings them in from South Dakota to Kansas border. In August we had the National Campers' Association out there last year with over 11,000 people attending. I will have to admit I went to my first race last Saturday afternoon. Senator Schmit might enjoy this a little bit. I did go to a dog race down in Yuma a few years back and I was too much of a chicken to bet until the very last race. I did bet on it, but what do you suppose my dog did? It did his housekeeping chores right square in front of the grandstand, so after the race was completed my dog finished. So that's my luck in gambling and that was, I guess, the last dog race that I've bet on. And...as all I can say, I was going to say the same as Senator Conway. It does bring a lot to the agriculture industry to support these horses and the exotic tax I think