SB 582: Authorize Indian Gaming/Revenue Senate Debate, 2rd reading *May 16, 2012*

Edited for clarity and grammar

Lt. Gov. Dalton: Senate Bill 582, the Clerk will read.

Reading Clerk: Senate Bill 582, Authorize Indian Gaming/Revenue...

Lt. Gov. Dalton: Sen. Apodaca is recognized to explain the bill.

Senator Apodaca: Thank you, Mr. President. Members, well, for those of us that have been around here we've been dealing with this, I guess, ten years or so, at least. It's now before us. We have heard all the talk. I think we've heard explanations of what it does, what it doesn't do, what it may do. I have heard a lot of things about this bill, but I think the time is upon us to move on. And so we bring that before us on the first day.

What this bill simply does is allow Cherokee Indians to place live dealers where they have machines now. What that will do is bring us probably 400 jobs to begin with, or within a reasonable about of time. It will start a fund in the budget that will ultimately, we think conservatively will bring in 60 to 90 million dollars that we can put towards education. Any General Assembly coming forth can allocate these funds, but the fund set up is for education. So this does some good things.

We all know, you know, it may have possible bad ramifications, but many things we do in life do. Look at us - me too, Senator Tillman, you too. But, all that being said, human beings should be able to make their own choices in life. And if they desire to go over to the Cherokee reservation and sit down at the Blackjack table and play then, you know, so be it. Many of us do, but not a lot of us admit it. I have been to Cherokee one time to play Blackjack. I played \$20 and I lost, so that was it for me. But I have been other places.

So I'm not going to sit here and tell you that this is going to cure all the ills of the west or it's going to bring in more problems to us. I don't think it will. I think we're going to have the same situation we have today once this is implemented. But I do think it will be a vital advantage or help economically for Western North Carolina. So that's why I bring this before you today and ask for your support. I think others will speak and give you some more details, but I think we're pretty well versed on it. So please support this bill

Lt. Gov. Dalton: The floor is open for debate on Senate Bill 582. Senator Hise, for what purpose do you rise?

Senator Hise: To speak to the bill.

Lt. Gov. Dalton: The Senator has the floor.

Senator Hise: Thank you, Members. To say that I haven't struggled with the concept of gambling or expanding gambling would not be true - I very much have. I had the opportunity a couple weeks ago to go to Cherokee. There was a conference there. I will tell you that the Harrah's Inn is one of the nicest conference sites and one of the only places we have available in the far western part of the state to hold

events because the revenues allowed that to occur. And I spent quite a bit of time observing the floor, observing what was going, particularly the Blackjack table that they currently play. And I'll tell you it's quite interesting. They have a video of a dealer - not an individual from that area – who portrays being a dealer, who looks as though they're handing out cards, who players of the game sit there and they see digital replications of cards come across as they play the exact same game that occurs in physical form of a game of Blackjack. While some of the odds may be different or could be adjusted then they could with a deck of cards, it is the exact same game that is occurring.

I've heard a lot of talk on this bill about the addictive nature of gambling. I will tell you, as well, that having children myself, watching this observation of individuals playing these games, I worry much more about the addictive nature of the digital games. We can play games with my family or others, and they can enjoy them and moving forward you give them the opportunity of a computer screen and flashing sirens and everything else. It is something that psychologically leads much more to addiction than this physical card game that's been played for generations.

I'm not here to support the expansion of gambling. If I felt that this was somehow moving this all over North Carolina or allowing this to occur all over the State of North Carolina, I'd be very much opposed to it and to that expansion. I don't believe that's what's happening. I believe the limitations that exist in this bill to the areas owned before 1988 are protections for the State, and I think are good for us. I think the job creation is incredible for Western North Carolina. I'm someone who will tell you that I'd like to see the digital gaming go altogether - not be part of this. But I think if we can take these environments and move them towards a more physical-gamed environment with live dealers and others who can observe the individual playing and the addictive behaviors that they are portraying - whether or not they've consumed too much, whether or not they've done these type of things - and have someone there who can observe that and not a machine that continues to operate, I think it would be a positive move across our State. And that's why I join with the other Senators in Western North Carolina, and all those that represent the areas to the west of Interstate 26, where this compact ends, in support this deal. Thank you.

Lt. Gov. Dalton: Further discussion and debate on Senate Bill 582. Senator McKissick, for what purpose do you rise?

Senator McKissick: To speak on the bill.

Lt. Gov. Dalton: The Senator has the floor.

Senator McKissick: I too stand to speak in favor of this bill. I'm very pleased to see us with an open mind in this chamber towards what we can do to assist the Cherokee with this venture. I think allowing live gaming doesn't really change the character of what is going on in the casino today, but one thing it will do is have this very significant positive impact on the local economy with the 400 jobs that's anticipated. And you ask about the median income of those that will be in those jobs. By the time you add up the jobs and the benefit packages they'll receive, you're looking at about \$60,000. And that's quite substantial, and significantly in excess of the median income in that area. So, I mean, we're talking about good-paying jobs with full benefit packages.

More importantly, if we look at the benefits it will provide to the State of North Carolina for the 30-year term of this compact agreement, you're looking at about \$1.5 million initially, going upwards to about \$5 million by the end of it, going towards education. And we need every dollar in this state that we can contribute for the education of our children, as well as our adults in this State. So I speak in support of this bill and encourage all of your support, as well.

Lt. Gov. Dalton: Further discussion and debate. Senator Nesbitt, for what purpose do you rise?

Senator Nesbitt: Thank you, Mr. President – to speak on the bill.

Lt. Gov. Dalton: Senator Nesbitt has the floor.

Senator Nesbitt: Thank you, Mr. President. Members of the Senate, we appreciate very much you taking the time to take this bill up and hopefully pass it so we can get on with doing good things in western North Carolina. I've given this speech a couple of times about what it has meant to our region. I'm not going to give you the whole thing. But just start with the \$20 million fiber optic cable – about as big around as your arm – that goes through seven counties up there. The Cherokee and Drake Industries out in the far west paid for that with their own money in order to get redundancy on the internet system for their ventures. As I understand it, over the years it's been given to the schools if they want to hook on to it, and it's wired an area of the far west that we would have never done in my lifetime or my son's lifetime if they hadn't done it.

For their own people – a \$130 million school, and the Education Committee needs to go visit. State of the art, everything you need, their graduation rate is now above 90%. I think it was 94-point-something I was looking at this morning – because kids want to be there! It's the neatest place on the reservation. And they want to be there and they want to learn.

It supports the economy in about 8 or 9 counties up there. There are 2,000 employees there, but there's another 20 million dollars' worth of products brought to the reservation and bought from other businesses. It has spurred a ton of small businesses all around the reservation up there that serve the casino. It drives the economy for the far west. There's not another thing we can do down here to help them. They're helping themselves, if we'll just give them a little pat on the back and send them on. So we appreciate you sticking with us on this. And I think we've been pretty good about supporting you when you find something. If you find a goldmine like this for your area, you let me know and count me in, because it's mind-bending what it has done for the economy up there in that region. Thank you.

Lt. Gov. Dalton: Further discussion and debate. Hearing none, the question before the Senate is the passage of Senate Bill 582 on its second reading. All those in favor will vote "aye," those opposed will vote "no." Five seconds will be allowed for the voting. The Clerk will record the vote...Thirty-three having voted in the affirmative and 14 in the negative, Senate Bill 582 has passed its second reading and, without objection, will be read a third time.

Reading Clerk: North Carolina General Assembly enacts...

Lt. Gov. Dalton: Any further debate? Hearing none, the question before the Senate is the passage of Senate Bill 582 on its third reading. All those in favor will say "aye,"...opposed "no." The ayes have it, and Senate Bill 582, having passed its third reading, will be sent to the House.

SB 582: Authorize Indian Gaming/Revenue Senate Debate, Concurrence June 6, 2012 Edited for clarity and grammar

Sen. Apodaca: Mr. President, a motion relevant to today's calendar, please?

Lt. Gov. Dalton: The Senator has the floor.

Sen. Apodaca: Mr. President, Members, Senate Bill 582, "Authorize Indian Gaming/Revenue," is currently on today's calendar for concurrence. I ask that it be brought before us for immediate consideration.

Lt. Gov. Dalton: If there's no objection...so ordered. Members, we're ready to go to the calendar. That will be our first bill. For concurrence - Senate Bill 582. The Clerk will read.

Reading Clerk: Senate Bill 582, Authorize Indian Gaming/Revenue.

Lt. Gov. Dalton: Senator Apodaca is recognized to explain the motion to concur.

Senator Apodaca: Thank you. Mr. President and Members, this is our Cherokee bill. It has come back from the House. There was only one change made. I think we had "existing facilities" plus four additional...Regardless, they reduced from existing facility, plus two. That was the only change. It lessened the amount of facilities. I ask for your concurrence.

Lt. Gov. Dalton: Any discussion and debate on the motion to concur? Hearing none, the question before the Senate is concurrence in the House Committee Substitute to Senate Bill 582. Those in favor of concurrence will vote "aye," those opposed will vote "no." Five seconds will be allowed for the voting. The Clerk will record the vote... Thirty-five having voted in the affirmative and 11 in the negative, the Senate has concurred in the House Committee Substitute to Senate Bill 582. It will be enrolled and sent to the Governor.

Senator Apodaca: Mr. President?

Lt. Gov. Dalton: Senator Apodaca, for what purpose do you rise?

Senator Apodaca: Motion, please.

Lt. Gov. Dalton: You have the floor to make your motion.

Senator Apodaca: I need, if we could, could we send that to the Governor by special messenger please?

Lt. Gov. Dalton: So ordered.