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致列位立法會尊貴議員

我們堅決反對賭波合法化

上星期四我們送走了香港女兒—謝婉雯醫生，列位官員宣稱要重新尋找出香港精神。今日，政府卻要將足球博彩規範化或合法化。我們中心同寅深覺若將足球博彩規範化就是在重尋香港精神的路上，放下不少障礙。正所謂：「淡薄以明志，寧靜以志遠」，如果賭波合法化後，實是建立了不少機制，叫香港市民在重尋香港精神路上失去方向、迷了途、甚至走離了這路。因此，我們要再次堅決表明反對賭波合法化。

其中理由有四點：

一．稅收不添．反增貧窮。

- 1.香港稅收不會因足球博彩合法化而增加，只會增添更多賭徒，而他們從來不會消費，甚至會連累家人及周邊朋友因欠債不去消費，因此，賭波合法化後，只會為特首年初所倡導的本土經濟造成重大打擊。
- 2.貧窮人因無錢才會搏，他們深以為可以「以小搏大」點知愈博愈輸，最後要到賭場去賭，家人要為他們還債。在我們中心過去兩年多，上來中心接受輔導的 1442 個個案中，他們每月平均用其月薪三倍的金錢去賭博，從而可見賭波合法化會帶來社會更多貧窮。

二．未見其利．先見其害。

- 1.現在盛行足球賭博的賽事，多在晚間進行，帶來日間無精神工作，所損失工時，誰會計算呢？在我們中心的個案中，大部份賭徒都表示不能投入工作中，有些作老闆的甚至不願返工的。
- 2.青少年必會較容易投入足球賭博中，帶來荒廢學業，精神價值朽曲。就我日前與澳門理工學院講師相談，得知自從澳門賭波合法化後，青少年賭博數字有所上升。

三．破壞力強．精神受損。

- 1.足球賭博鼓吹個人主義，自我中心，損人利己，逃避責任等精神。難道這便是香港精神？
- 2.賭博將家庭制度完全破壞，拉破家庭凝聚力，帶來更多破裂和傷痛家庭。突破機構所作的調查中所顯示，有廿四萬家庭受到負面影響。

四·以賭制賭·容易跌倒。

- 1.帶來許多香港人的擔心，社工界掛心家庭受到打擊，青少年思想受到污染。紛紛起來要建立保護網，有機構開辦賭博輔導事工，有機構培訓同工去關顧受賭博影響的家人，有青少年機構要培訓同工去輔導青少年賭博問題。教育界也推行賭博輔導教育。我們中心將會推出賭博教育網，以能教育青少年一代認識賭博的真相。
- 2.賭波合法化仍未推行，馬會便提出許多賭博的方法冀與外圍競爭，也許在未來，為要推行賭波合法化，將帶來的花費會更大，帶給香港更大打擊，

基於以上四個理由，我們堅決反對賭波合法化。並要求香港政府為現時十萬問題或病態賭徒設立基金，提供治療服務；設立一獨立委員會，將現時賭博政策全面檢討；並可以為未來的一代，作全面教育及預防工作。

隨函送上在“Insight on the News. Volume: 15. Issue: 20.”的“Catherine Edwards: Legal Gambling May Be a Bad Bet.”一文章給各尊貴議員，望各位在投票前參考，以免賭波合法化在香港是一項壞的投注。

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2003年5月28日

Legal Gambling May Be a Bad Bet

by Catherine Edwards

Government got into gambling to weed out the criminal element and boost revenues without tax hikes. But critics say the games rely on those who can least afford to play.

A surprise success at the box office this year was an Irish film titled *Waking Ned Devine*. In this black comedy, the elation of winning the Irish sweepstakes kills a man in a remote Irish fishing village. His friends bury him, take his winning ticket and then go to extraordinary lengths to pretend that Ned still is alive to cash in on his fortune. The Irish always have prided themselves on their luck and, until 1963, the only hope Americans had of winning a lottery was to join them in Ireland or play illegal numbers games run by criminals in back alleys.

Today lottery winners are announced every day on television, as state and local governments profit from having nationalized the numbers racket long run by organized-crime syndicates.

Thirty-six years ago New Hampshire was the first state in this century to institute a lottery. Since then 37 other states and the District of Columbia have opted for this means of obtaining revenue without having to raise taxes. Lottery sales last year mushroomed to \$35.8 billion. Lottery mania reached a high last July when 13 machinists in Ohio won a record \$295.7 million jackpot in the multistate Powerball game.

But even winning the lottery doesn't guarantee happiness. Winners find themselves besieged by salesmen, threats and intimidation from total strangers. One Virginia couple that won a jackpot feared their children might be kidnapped and held for ransom. A survey at a local Washington rescue mission revealed former winners who had blown their money in one night or lost it over time to pay for drugs or alcohol.

Rep. Frank Wolf, a Virginia Republican, introduced legislation in 1997 that created the National Gambling Impact Study Commission, or NGISC. After nearly two years of work, the commission will present its final report to Congress and the president in June. Last month it voted to approve a draft report recommending that policymakers at all levels impose a moratorium on gambling until research and assessment can be completed. Four of the nine commissioners dissented, however, and one of those vowed to write a minority report. But all of the commissioners agree that the lotteries need reform.

Commission members were struck by the findings of Duke University professors Charles Clotfelter and Phillip Cook, authors of a 1989 book, *Selling Hope: State Lotteries in America*. They since have updated their research, presenting it to the commission in April. Clotfelter and Cook found that 5

percent of lottery players account for 51 percent of sales and spend an average of \$3,500 a year on tickets. They also found that the most frequent players are from households earning less than \$10,000 a year, and that blacks play four times more often than whites. The lotteries make the bulk of their revenues from those who play frequently. Assuming everyone was a casual player and spent the median amount of \$74 a year on lottery tickets, sales for 1997 would have dropped from \$36 billion to \$7.4 billion. "The sense that everybody plays and it's a broad-based participation is absolutely true, but the people who are important in terms of revenues are the small percentage playing \$3,500 a year or more," says Cook. These mostly are poor blacks.

Dr. James Dobson, president of Focus on the Family and a member of the gambling commission, says he is concerned about the lottery harming not only the poor and desperate but also the gambling-addicted. Keith Whyte, executive director of the National Council on Problem Gambling, agrees. "Of the \$35.8 billion netted in sales last year by the gambling industry, only \$20 million was spent addressing problem gambling. Fifteen states have no funding for helping problem gamblers," he says. According to a study commissioned by the NGISC and conducted by the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center, 5 million Americans were at risk for pathological gambling behavior last year and 15 million are at risk during a lifetime.

Gamblers Anonymous, which is modeled on the 12-step program of Alcoholics Anonymous, had 706 chapters in the United States in 1992. In 1999 it has 1,340 chapters. The commission recommends in its draft report that a portion of revenues from the lotteries be applied to treatment, research and education concerning pathological and problem gambling.

The Rev. Steve Burger, executive director of the International Union of Gospel Missions, knows what it means to try to reassemble lives that have fallen apart from excessive gambling. "The groups that promote gambling certainly don't pick up the pieces," he says. Burger says the consequences of gambling addiction are much the same as when the industry was run by organized crime. "Mr. Gambling cleaned himself up and came out of the closet, put on a nice suit and called himself Mr. Gaming," says Burger.

A survey of mission residents found 85 percent said they had gambled and played the lottery, 70 percent said that gambling made it more difficult to get off the streets and 18 percent believed it was a factor in their homelessness. Burger admonishes the evangelical church for its silence on the gambling issue. Preachers don't want the controversy, he says. "We are standing against a big-business industry that often focuses its advertising on poor, urban folks."

George Anderson runs the Minnesota State Lottery and is president of the North American Association of State and Provincial Lotteries. "We produce pamphlets, air 'play-responsibly' ads and PSAs [public-service announcements]," Anderson says. He cites Minnesota as one of the leaders in addressing problems related to gambling and says Oregon and Iowa also allocate millions for this.

A number of state lotteries are taking steps to polish their images. Connecticut recently decided to remove lottery vending machines from some supermarkets. Louisiana has decided to engage only in "no-hype" advertising. And in a bizarre oxymoron Virginia law requires that advertisements don't encourage people to play more than they would otherwise. The Connecticut lottery claims to have learned its lesson when the state Legislature yanked an ad in the 1980s that pictured a retiree fishing on a lake, laughing as he tells the camera, "I never planned for the future. I never saved. I never did anything that they told me to do. What I did was play the Connecticut lotto game and I won umpteen million dollars and here I am."

As some states take steps to clean up their images, others are just starting to get into the gambling industry. Last year, Govs. Fob James of Alabama and David Beasley of South Carolina lost their reelection bids over the issues of gambling and the lottery. Both campaigned against the lottery and lost when gambling interests poured huge sums into their opponents' coffers. Beasley says, "We think the gambling industry in South Carolina spent between \$10 million and \$20 million in independent, legal and illegal money to fight me. They have no honor and integrity and are the most corrupt organization I've ever known." He continues, "We stood for principle; it wasn't the politically correct thing to do. But South Carolina now has a reputation for being a gambling state as opposed to being pro-family and pro-business." Beasley argues that the lottery preys upon the poor and expands big government.

New Alabama Gov. Don Siegelman, a Democrat, since has encouraged students to be "soldiers in this battle," urging them to promote gambling by talking to their friends and family "at the gas station, at church and at home." Outraged by the governor's call for young people to become involved in gambling, Wolf wrote him a letter outlining concerns about the effects of gambling on the young.

"According to a recent National Research Council Report, the rates of pathological gambling among adolescents in the United States are comparable to the rates of ... alcohol ... [and] comparable to marijuana use, and they equal or exceed ... use of [other] illicit drugs ...," the congressman wrote. "I am sure that is not what you want for the youth of Alabama." Wolf says he worries about the long-term effects on kids growing up with the lottery. "The lottery was never around when I was a kid; now kids see it everywhere, and it's acceptable because it's run by your state Legislature."

Robert Goodman, executive director of the nonpartisan U.S. Gambling Research Institute, agrees that legalized gambling and state lotteries are not good ways to run government. Before the 1990s, Goodman's interests were in economic development and urban planning. In 1992 he realized that more and more states were using gambling to raise revenue. "The original argument for lotteries was that they would be out of the hands of organized crime and would be run by the government to help fund public programs," he says. "If you look at the results, the government just substituted gambling money for the money they were already spending," freeing funds for further government expansion.

A study conducted by St. Mary's College in Notre Dame, Ind., examined education funding in all 50 states, including 12 in which lottery proceeds help fund schools. They discovered that upon establishing a lottery, states are likely to decrease their rate of appropriation for education and that, in the long run, many states then use revenues from the lotteries to replace, not augment, education spending.

The most touted example of a lottery funding education is in Georgia, where retired governor Zell Miller instituted the lottery in 1993 to help fund the Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally, or HOPE, scholarship program that pays college expenses for students. The Georgia lottery sells more lottery tickets in poor areas than in affluent neighborhoods, but the average income for those receiving HOPE scholarships is \$13,000 higher than the state average. This has led critics to suggest that this is a case of the poor subsidizing the better off under the guise of government good works. "You are introducing a regressive tax system, funded through people with low incomes and behavioral problems," Goodman says. "Is that a good way to run government?"

Using money from the lottery, the bulk of which comes from poor and low-income groups, to fund programs for such groups hardly is a wash because such as plan fails to consider the long-term social and economic problems caused by gambling itself. University of Illinois professor John Kindt calculates that for every \$1 the state receives in gambling revenues, it costs the state nearly \$3 in increased criminal-justice, social-welfare and other expenses. In addition, reports show that discretionary spending in communities goes down when the lottery is introduced. "Look, if you have \$20 and you spend \$10 on lottery tickets instead of dinner, that's \$10 less for the local economy," says Goodman.

Terry Lanni, chief executive officer of MGM Grand Inc. in Las Vegas and a member of the NGISC, argues that at least casino gambling creates jobs. "Who else would go in and set up a business in the Mississippi Delta?" he asks. Minnesota lottery director Anderson says the number of lottery employees is dramatically less than the manpower required to run casinos or riverboats. But once the gambling interests come in they have big money to hire lobbyists. In 1993 the South Carolina Legislature passed a law mandating that jackpots from video poker not exceed \$125 per person. Larry Huff, president of the only South Carolina antigambling-advocacy group, says the idea was that "nobody would want to play if winnings are that small." When a federal judge upheld the constitutionality of that law, the gambling interests enlisted more than 30 lobbyists to repeal it.

Meanwhile, the future of lotteries looks mixed. The NGISC has recommended in its draft report that lotteries be subject to more oversight. Major vendors may be investigated to ensure that they have no offshore holdings they could launder through the lottery system. The commission hopes to recommend a ban on Internet gambling and a uniform gambling-eligibility age of 21. After the commission files its report, it will be up to Congress and elected state

officials to implement or ignore the recommendations. Easier said than done, say critics of legalized gambling. As former governor Beasley found out, "If you want to take on the gambling industry, be prepared to walk away from the governor's mansion."

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