

Gambling-Related Legislation Moves in Kentucky Legislature

Seven bills related to gambling were introduced in the Kentucky legislature during the 2003 session, which will end in mid-March. The Kentucky Council on Problem Gambling (KYCPG) actively supports two of the bills.

- HB 264 creates a gamblers assistance fund with provisions similar to bills KYCPG supported in the 2000 and 2002 sessions. The bill was introduced jointly by Rep. C.B. Embry and Rep. Jack Coleman. It was referred to the Licensing and Occupations Committee and was not called for a hearing by the end of February.
- HCR 126 is a concurrent resolution that directs the Legislative Research Commission to study the impact of problem gambling in the state and report to the General Assembly with recommendations before the 2004 session. Introduced by Rep. Embry, it passed the House 97-0 and was scheduled for a hearing before the Senate Licensing and Occupations Committee on Feb. 27. If reported favorably by the committee, it could be called for approval by the Senate. Although the legislation has no force of law, the resulting study and recommendations are hoped to spur action on the issue in 2004.

HB 260 relates to the number of games that can be played at charitable gaming facilities. HB 277 creates a new Kentucky Lottery game with proceeds devoted to the educational excellence fund. Both bills were referred to the Licensing and Occupations Committee and not called for hearings by the end of February.

Three bills deal with expanding gambling. HB 536 and HB 537 are companion measures that amend Kentucky Lottery and horse racing legislation to permit video slot machines at Kentucky's eight race tracks. HB 559 would place the issue to allow the Kentucky Lottery to oversee placement of video slots at race tracks before the state's voters as a constitutional amendment.

HB 536 is authorizing legislation, and it does require the Lottery, the Kentucky Racing Commission, and the Department of Charitable Gaming to develop a plan to address the issue of problem gambling in the state. HB 537 contains directions for distribution of gaming revenue. It creates a problem gamblers assistance fund, but KYCPG's analysis of the language indicates the fund will receive insufficient money to address the problem gambling that may surface from expanded gambling. During the last week of February, members of the House Democratic caucus were trying to gather support to pass the bill. Senate leadership indicated it was not supportive. Many observers believe the bills are a prelude to action in the 2004 legislative session.

HCR 126 Testimony

At the invitation of Rep. Embry, KYCPG was invited to prepare and deliver testimony before the House Licensing and Occupations Committee. Participating were KYCPG President Caleb Cooley and Board Member Tangerine-Ann Holt, Ph.D., along with Certified Compulsive Gambler Counselors Steven Alexander,

Ph.D. and Herbert (Bud) Newman. The committee voted unanimously to report the bill favorably to the House.

The KYCPG testimony, delivered by Cooley, noted, "The first step in any process to address an issue is to grasp the size of the problem. HCR 126 is an initial step to quantify the scope of compulsive and problem gambling in Kentucky." It cited a two-thirds increase over two years in the number of callers to the 1-800-GAMBLER helpline who received some measurable service, reports from counselors, and the Dec. 22-24, 2002, *Louisville Courier-Journal* series on problem gambling as evidence of need. It also noted national prevalence estimates. "These anecdotes and statistics are interesting, and they indicate Kentucky may face a problem, but they do not quantify the issue for us," the testimony continued. "HCR 126 will be a start toward that end."

GAP — Don't Expand Gambling Without It

The KYCPG Legislative Committee, consisting of Treasurer Dennis Boyd as chair, Professional Adviser Curtis L. Barrett, Ph.D., and Board Member Gayle DiCesare, CEO of River Valley Behavioral Health in Owensboro, developed a recommendation for a Gamblers Assistance Program (GAP). They considered existing need and the potential impact of expanded gambling, as well as problem gambler programs in other states. The proposal was delivered to members of the Kentucky legislature and individuals and groups interested in expanded gambling in the state. If gambling is expanded in the state, GAP offers a responsible proposal to address problem gambling.

GAP contains seven components: a prevalence study, evaluation of programs and services, education and prevention, research, out-patient treatment, in-patient treatment, and helpline funding. The total cost is estimated at \$4.3 million, which is 1.46 percent of net annual gaming income (total dollars wagered minus winnings paid) of \$300 million. The proposal emphasizes: "It is not a bailout or welfare. It is a series of programs and services for those who become addicted to gambling."

Copies of GAP are available from KYCPG by contacting Executive Director Michael R. Stone at 502/223-1823 or by e-mail at kmstone@mis.net.

National Problem Gambling Awareness Week March 10-16

The first National Problem Gambling Awareness Week is scheduled for March 10-16. KYCPG is a sponsor of the effort, which was created by the Association of Problem Gambling Service Administrators and the National Council on Problem Gambling. The organizers hope that activities such as media advisories, educational programs, and an emphasis on screening at comprehensive mental health facilities will spur attention to the need for more problem gambler services as well as identify and offer help to problem gamblers. Details and materials, including screens, are posted on the www.apgsa.org website.

Breaking News in Kentucky!

by **Curtis L. Barrett, Ph.D., ABPP, CCGC, NCGC**
KYCPG Professional Adviser

We who make all or part of our living from gambling operations should not be surprised when the media feature either our successes or our problems. A recent series in the *Louisville Courier Journal* (Dec. 22-23, 2002) went page after page for three days documenting the reality of problem gambling. There were some eye openers in this series that should concern all of us.

The headline, "Gambling's rise takes human toll: compulsive bettors find financial ruin, not fortune" was, to say the least, a grabber. It was asserted that 204,000 people in Kentucky and Indiana have gambling problems. The articles that took six months of research to prepare, ". . . found that gambling related thefts, embezzlements and bankruptcies are on the rise, as are calls to hotlines. And many families in the region are paying the price. It also found that other states are doing a better job of dealing with the problem." In a later article, it was reported that Internet Gambling, although illegal, is ". . . a growing concern." A real face was put on this problem. A 73-year-old woman, recently widowed, was described as dealing with her grief by gambling on the Internet. Within three years, her losses amounted to \$109,000. She was devastated financially. This is tragic but not unusual with gambling disorders.

Contrast this tragedy with the media hype about our most recent Powerball winner. Much was made of his proposed charitable contributions. Unfortunately, little was said about the money that Powerball lotteries put into public coffers, as they are designed to do. Clearly, our business has the power to do much good and the power to do great harm to some of our patrons.

Neither the articles on problem gambling nor the Powerball winner articles should surprise readers of this column. We know of the good that lotteries can do. It is this good that patrons use to justify relatively low winnings when they Play Responsibly. Other forms of gambling pay back more to the player but none responds to human needs in the way that lotteries do. With regard to problem gambling, what better compliment can there be than quoting Rick Redman, of the Kentucky Lottery Corporation (KLC), in the first article? Redman was straightforward: Problem Gambling is ". . . an issue that is going to have to be addressed."

Redman had plenty of additional ammunition. (1) The KLC "Play Responsibly Program" is internationally known. The North American Association of State and Provincial Lotteries (NASPL) formally applauded these KLC efforts recently with an award to Redman. (2) The 23 problem gambling counselors in Kentucky who recently passed the written examination for certification owe much of their success to training provided, in large part, by KLC. (3) Retailers have information at every play station to assist players who are playing **over** their head instead of **with** their head. And, (4) who can forget the public service announcements that the KLC, and nobody else in Kentucky, has put on television. They are effective, and they are superb!

Neither problem gambling nor public service are "breaking news" for KLC retailers. KLC has been addressing this problem, in its own operation, and advocating for the Commonwealth and Kentucky's other gaming businesses to join in the efforts. That work will continue until Kentucky's problem gamblers have what they need. □

Upcoming Events

- March 10-16, National Problem Gambling Awareness Week
- June 19-21, National Conference on Problem Gambling, Hyatt Regency, Louisville (registration on-line at www.ncpgambling.org)
- July 23, Workshop, *Trends in Gambling Counseling*, Northern Kentucky University (during Kentucky School on Alcohol and Other Drug Studies)
- August 4-8, Responsible Gaming Education Week
- September 17, Mental Health Association of Northern Kentucky, St. Elizabeth Medical Center, Edgewood, 6:15 p.m., Curtis L. Barrett, Ph.D., on problem gambling

Gamblers Anonymous Meetings

The following is a list of the current G.A. (Gamblers Anonymous) meetings in or serving Kentucky. For exact times, locations and a phone number for contact person, **please call 1-800-GAMBLER.**

Monday

- Southeast Christian Church, 7 p.m., Louisville (Also separate Gam-Anon meeting at 6 p.m.)
- Lakeside Christian Church, 7:30 p.m., Florence
- St. Paul Lutheran Church, 8 p.m., Huntington, WV
- Steppingstone Counseling, 7 p.m., Evansville, IN

Tuesday

- CARE Center, 9 p.m., Louisville

- First Presbyterian Church, 6:30 p.m., Lexington
- First Baptist Church, 6:30 p.m., Pikeville (Also separate Gam-Anon meeting)
- Florence Christian Church, 8 p.m., Florence
- Lincoln Trail Behavioral Center, 7:30 p.m., Radcliff

Wednesday

- Pigeon Roost 12-step Club, 7:30 p.m., Louisville

Thursday

- Southland Christian Church, 6:30 p.m., Lexington
- Caritas Peace Ctr., 1st Fl. Cafeteria, 7:30 p.m., Louisville
- St. Mary's Church, 6 p.m., Evansville, IN (Also separate Gam-Anon meeting)

Friday

- Generations Center (downtown), 6:30 p.m., Hazard
- Living Stone, 7:30 p.m., Louisville (Also separate Gam-Anon meeting)

Saturday

- St. Michael's Catholic Church, 8:30 a.m., Louisville
- Token Club III, 6 p.m., Louisville

Sunday

- Hazelwood United Methodist Church, 1 p.m., Louisville (Open meeting, family welcome)
- KET Building, 4:30 p.m., Lexington (Also separate Gam-Anon meeting)
- Methodist Temple, 5 p.m. Evansville, IN (Also separate Gam-Anon meet.)
- Unity Trinity Methodist Church, 7 p.m., New Albany, IN