

Expanded Gambling Likely to be Issue in 2004 Session

One gubernatorial candidate, Democrat Ben Chandler, advocates expanding legal gambling in Kentucky by allowing electronic slot machines at Kentucky's horse racing tracks, plus some form of legal gambling in Owensboro. He wants tax revenues from expanded gambling to finance education, plus a small portion for problem gambling awareness and treatment. The other gubernatorial candidate, Republican Ernie Fletcher, says he personally opposes expanded gambling in the state, but would not block a vote on a constitutional amendment to permit it.

Meanwhile, Rep. Tom Burch prefiled three bills that will be heard by the 2004 General Assembly that will convene in January. *BR20* and *BR21* are similar to two provisions Burch introduced in the 2003 General Assembly session that would approve electronic slot machines owned and operated by the Kentucky Lottery Corporation and placed at the state's horse race tracks. Most of the revenue would support horse racing or be earmarked for use by the General Assembly. A small percentage of revenue would support problem gambling awareness and treatment. Burch's third bill, *BR93*, would put the issue of expanded gambling in the form of electronic slot machines at race tracks before voters as a constitutional amendment.

Continuing reports that Kentucky's state budget will not meet revenue projections, coupled with lawsuits and constituent demands for more funding for education and Medicare services, among other programs, seems to indicate that expanded gambling — seen as a solution to increasing revenue without raising taxes — will be brought before the 2004 General Assembly session. A Bluegrass State Poll published by the *Louisville Courier-Journal* indicated 56 percent of Kentuckians favor expanded gambling.

LRC Preliminary Report Cites 0.9 percent Prevalence Rate

Representative C.B. Embry told the Interim Joint Committee on Licensing and Occupations on Oct. 10, 2003, that probable legislation to expand gambling in the 2004 General Assembly session was one of the reasons he authored *HCR126*. The bill, which passed the 2003 General Assembly and was approved by Gov. Paul Patton, caused the Legislative Research Commission to study the impact of compulsive gambling in the state. Embry said, while he personally opposed expanded gambling, that he hoped the LRC study would provide facts and figures about compulsive gambling in the state so that debate could be based on something other than opinion. He said expanded gambling brings with it some negative consequences, and that the state should initiate some funding for awareness and treatment of problem gambling.

Embry's remarks preceded a presentation by LRC staff economist Dr. Barry Boardman, who gave a preliminary summary of the study authorized by *HCR126*. Boardman said the final report

was being edited and likely would be presented in two-three weeks.

The key finding was that Kentucky has a prevalence rate of current compulsive gamblers of 0.9 percent. The figure was based on a survey of 1,200 adults conducted during the summer 2003, which found that 55 percent gambled at some time during the previous year. A 10-question follow-up survey of those who gambled based on the criteria for pathological gambling in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the Mental Disorders* showed:

- 87.7 percent were social gamblers
- 10 percent were at-risk gamblers
- 1.2 percent were problem gamblers
- 0.9 percent were compulsive gamblers.

National studies from the Harvard Medical School Division on Addictions and the National Opinion Research Council both pegged the rate of compulsive gambling at about 1 percent. Boardman emphasized that the nature of the survey study meant the figures were conservative and "lower-bound." He also said it represents only current compulsive gamblers. A compulsive gambler in recovery who had not gambled in the last year was not included. He said that the percentage of compulsive gamblers indicates a range in Kentucky of 15,000-30,000 individuals.

He also said that a separate survey of state-supported substance abuse treatment facilities indicated that 24,000 individuals presented themselves for possible gambling treatment in 2002. About 20 percent of substance abuse counselors had received some training in treatment compulsive gamblers, but two-thirds of all substance abuse treatment sites did not have a trained gambler counselor on staff.

A separate survey of Gamblers Anonymous attendees showed that 75 percent wrote bad checks to finance gambling, 60 percent stole to finance their gambling, 36 percent filed bankruptcy, and the average debt of respondents was \$60,000.

The follow-up discussion with the Interim Committee members present indicated understanding that problem and compulsive gambling existed in the state, but there were no specific suggestions to address it. Rep. Tom Burch's bills, *BR20* and *BR21*, do have provisions addressing problem gambling services. KYCPG has developed legislative language to create a Gamblers Assistance Program — *GAP* — that estimates the amount of funds necessary to address the current need. The estimates were based on existing programs in other states. Copies of *GAP* are available from KYCPG by calling 502/223-1823 or e-mailing kmstone@mis.net.

EDITORIAL — The LRC study, in replicating previous studies, supports the conclusion that Kentucky already has compulsive gamblers. Expanded gambling will cause more to surface for treatment. Estimates are that each compulsive gambler affects seven additional individuals, and other estimates indicate each compulsive gambler costs society more than \$13,000. Expanded gambling may provide an avenue to earmark funds to address this growing public health concern; but regardless, it is a problem that should be addressed now for the benefit of all the Commonwealth and its citizens.

Big Decisions Coming in Kentucky

By Curtis L. Barrett, Ph.D., ABPP, CCGC, NCGC
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This is a time when it is great to be a Board member of the Kentucky Council on Problem Gambling. The reason? Board members can't take a position, pro or con, on the issue of legalized gambling. Of course, we do oppose *illegal* gambling in all of its forms.

Right now, Kentuckians face many tough decisions. Among these are: Should gambling be expanded? How should any decision about expanding or not expanding legal gambling be reached? By legislation? By constitutional amendment? If legal gambling is expanded, what new forms should be allowed? Should it be "slots for tots" with all proceeds going to education? Should expanded gambling be available exclusively at only one present gaming venue, e.g., Charitable Gaming, the Kentucky Lottery Corporation, or existing horse racing track and off-track betting facilities? Should there be a new gaming venue? Indiana has waterside casinos, i.e. boats that never move. Should Kentucky have them or land-based casinos such as those in New Jersey, New Mexico, Wisconsin and Connecticut? How much of the wagered dollar should go to a general fund or special fund? Should casinos be owned by private companies or, as in Canada and Native American areas, owned by the people (i.e., government)? Every one of these questions is baffling regardless of whether one is "pro" or "con" on expanded gambling.

Fortunately, we of the KYCPG won't be involved in these decisions. We have only one simple, though formidable, advocacy

task ahead of us. We must advocate for adequate funding for education about gambling, for effective prevention of gambling disorders, and for effective treatment when prevention has failed. With regard to treatment, one state, Louisiana, provides us a positive model. It now has two state-funded treatment programs that, together, can accommodate about 40 patients. New Jersey, Missouri, Illinois and Nevada, all major gaming states, still have none.

We know that the advocacy effort will be difficult. Kentucky already has more than 25,000 addicted gamblers. More will surface if gambling is expanded. Legislation that would expand gambling has provided but a pittance for education, prevention and treatment. Under the most optimistic of outcomes, this legislation might provide a million dollars for all of Kentucky and for all purposes! Compare that with Canada where approximately \$2(U.S.) are provided *per capita* for gambling problems. Applied to Kentucky, that rate would yield more than \$8 million dollars per year.

Kentucky does not have a lower rate of gambling disorders than Canada. What, then, does the provision of so little funding say about us? Are we that uncaring about those who suffer while citizens and businesses alike benefit from the "miracle tax" of gambling, i.e., one paid only by willing citizens or tourists? I think not. That is not the Kentucky I know. Reversing neglect of Kentucky's suffering gamblers is a matter of enlightened leadership: in KYCPG, in our legislature, and in gambling businesses that profit now, and will profit more, if gambling is expanded. We at KYCPG must do our part as advocates but, for sure, we need help. The *HELP WANTED* sign is out.

Upcoming Events

- Oct. 23-24, Kentucky Counselors Association Convention, Galt House Hotel, Louisville; KYCPG at Expert Expo, Oct. 23, 12:45-1:45 p.m.; Workshop, Oct. 24, 9:30-10:20 a.m.
- February 5-6, 2004, KYCPG Annual Educational and Awareness Conference, Holiday Inn North, Lexington. (Registration materials available in November 2003.)
- March 8-14, 2004, Second Annual National Problem Gambling Awareness Week.
- June 17-19, 2004, National Conference on Problem Gambling, Arizona Biltmore Resort and Spa, Phoenix, AZ.

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

- The Living Stone, 7 p.m., Louisville
- Southeast Christian Church, 6 p.m., Louisville (Gam-Anon meeting)
- St. Paul Lutheran Church, 8 p.m., Huntington, WV
- Steppingstone Counseling, 7 p.m., Evansville, IN

Tuesday

- Beargrass Christian Church, 3:30 p.m., Louisville
- 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, 7:30 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

- Living Stone, 7:30 p.m., Louisville (Also separate Gam-Anon meeting)

Saturday

- St. Michael's Catholic Church, 9 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