



CWA of Illinois Says Casino Gambling always a “Bad Bet”

Concerned Women for America (CWA) of Illinois stands in strong support of the efforts of Representative John E. Bradley (D-117) to reverse the state scourge of casino gambling in Illinois by repealing the Riverboat Gambling Act because: Gambling hurts and exploits families.

The human toll on communities where casinos are located is well-documented, and the damage to families, including women and children, is an established fact of social science. Health-related issues, harm to women, family conflict and abuse, domestic violence, financial strains, divorce, a link with substance abuse, increased crime, homelessness and even suicides as a result of gambling addictions, have been studied and reported.

For instance, more women gamble than men. Women who are problem gamblers have a two to three times higher incidence of substance dependence than other women according to one report. A Harvard Medical School report found that gambling disorders were “significantly more prevalent among young people.” And gambling participation among the oldest segment of our population has grown dramatically – from 35 percent in 1975 to 80 percent in 1999 according to another.

Just a few years ago, Illinois Senator Paul Simon related this true story. His mother was a member of a Lutheran church in downstate Collinsville “that had a fine substitute teacher” at its school. “Unknown to the teacher’s family, she had been visiting a gambling boat,” the senator said. “Money the family thought had gone to pay the rent and family bills had, instead, gone into wagers. One day, she left a message for her family, drove her car to a shopping center and killed herself.” The cost, of course, is never to just that one family. This teacher’s death certainly impacted her students as well as friends and neighbors. It should affect all of us as well.

The hidden costs of legalized gambling can affect even the occasional gambler. An upstanding member of the community can get carried away in a social gambling situation, lose a whole paycheck, and send his family into financial turmoil. The experience of guilt after causing this kind of harm to the family can have serious mental and physical effects.

President Lyndon Johnson once said, “The family is the cornerstone of our society...unless we work to strengthen the family, to create conditions under which most parents will stay together, all the rest—schools, playgrounds, public assistance and private concern—will never be enough.” CWA of Illinois agrees that we need to be vigilant in finding ways to strengthen families in our state, including current and continuing efforts to oppose legalized gambling, casino or otherwise, which undermines family stability.

The facts are in. Gambling hurts and exploits families. No amount of short-term revenue will ever change or justify that fact. Gambling with Illinois families is always high-stakes and always a bad bet. CWA of Illinois supports efforts to rid Illinois of casino gambling.

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Concerned Women for America is the nation’s largest public policy women’s organization.

**CONCERNED WOMEN FOR AMERICA
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