

HOUSE BILL REPORT

EHCR 4403

As Passed Legislature

Brief Description: Advocating the creation of a task force to study issues on gambling.

Sponsors: Representatives Heavey, Veloria, Long, Shin, Forner, Schmidt, R. Meyers, Johanson, Leonard, Chandler, Lisk, Pruitt, Ballasiotes and Morris.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Commerce & Labor, January 26, 1993, DPA;
Passed House, February 8, 1993, 95-0;
Amended by Senate;
Passed Legislature, April 20, 1993.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Heavey, Chair; G. Cole, Vice Chair; Lisk, Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Franklin; Horn; King; Springer; and Veloria.

Staff: Jim Kelley (786-7166).

Background: In recent years, the level of legalized wagering in Washington and across the nation has increased significantly. Gross receipts from legal gaming have nearly doubled since 1985. In addition, with the passage of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, tribal gaming has expanded into casino style games. Under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, the state is required to negotiate in good faith with any tribe wishing to conduct gambling activities that are not prohibited by the public policy of the state as reflected in its criminal laws and constitution. These and other factors have focused attention on the state's public policy regarding gambling.

Summary of Bill: The State Gambling Policy Task Force is established to examine: (1) The current nature and scope of authorized gambling in the state; (2) the future of gambling in the state; (3) the need for defining a clear public policy on gambling; and (4) the feasibility of merging the Gambling Commission, Lottery Commission, and Horse Racing Commission into one state agency.

The task force will be made up of 14 members, 11 of whom will be voting members. The voting members will include the governor or the governor's designee, three members from the majority caucus and two members from the minority caucus of the Senate, appointed by the President of the Senate and three members from the majority caucus and two members from the minority caucus of the House of Representatives, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The three nonvoting members will be representatives of the Washington State Gambling Commission, the Washington State Horse Racing Commission, and the Washington State Lottery Commission. The task force will appoint a chair and vice chair from among its membership.

The task force may consult with individuals from the public or private sector or ask them to establish an advisory committee. The task force shall use legislative staff and facilities and expenses shall be paid jointly by the Senate and the House of Representatives.

The task force shall submit a report summarizing its findings and recommendations to the Legislature by January 1, 1994.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Upon filing with the Secretary of State.

Testimony For: The Gambling Commission has been involved in this issue and is very supportive. It is imperative that we not "back into" a whole new public policy on gambling. There are many major gambling issues that must be dealt with today. The tribes generally support the task force concept. It will provide more clarity in negotiations and in the regulatory arena. The resolution is fine as long as there is no moratorium on new gambling proposals.

Testimony Against: A task force would be fine, but there is a fear that it would be accompanied by a moratorium on new gambling proposals. A moratorium would be unacceptable. The tavern owners need help now. We cannot afford to wait for the results of a study. Eight cardrooms have already gone out of business in the Tulalip area.

Witnesses: Frank Miller, Director, Washington State Gambling Commission (in favor); Jim Metcalf, Tulalip Tribes (in favor); Bill Fritz, Washington Charitable and Civic Gaming Association (in favor); Frank Warnke, Thoroughbred Racing Industry (in favor); Vito Chiechi, Washington State Licensed Beverage Association (opposed); Randy Scott, Lummi Tribe (in favor); Sharon Foster, Community Charities (opposed); and Becky Bogard, RDC Consultants (opposed).