

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6000

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Commerce & Labor, March 3, 1997
Ways & Means, March 7, 1997

Title: An act relating to using state lottery moneys for compulsive gambling education and awareness.

Brief Description: Creating a program for compulsive gambling education and awareness.

Sponsors: Senators Schow, Heavey, Horn and Oke.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Commerce & Labor: 3/3/97 [DP-WM].
Ways & Means: 3/7/97 [DP]

SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Schow, Chair; Horn, Vice Chair; Franklin, Fraser, Heavey and Newhouse.

Staff: Traci Ratzliff (786-7452)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators West, Chair; Deccio, Vice Chair; Strannigan, Vice Chair; Bauer, Brown, Fraser, Hochstatter, Kohl, Long, McDonald, Rossi, Schow, Snyder, Spanel, Swecker, Thibaudeau and Winsley.

Staff: Maura Sullivan (786-7431)

Background: In 1992, the state Lottery Commission funded a prevalence study on problem gambling among adults and adolescents in Washington. This study was conducted by Rachel Volberg, Ph.D. who has conducted similar studies in other states and countries. The Washington studies found that approximately 43,300 to 93,700 adults and 950 to 4,700 adolescents could be classified as current problem gamblers.

In December 1993, the Legislative Task Force on Gambling Policy recognized the existence of problem or compulsive gambling in this state, and acknowledged that the state should play a role in providing information (including referrals to appropriate services such as Gamblers Anonymous and treatment professionals) and education on problem gambling to those affected by the disorder and those mental health professionals who may come into contact with problem or compulsive gamblers.

Legislation was adopted in 1994 that recognized the existence of problem or compulsive gambling and directed the State Gambling Commission, Horse Racing Commission and the Lottery Commission to jointly develop informational materials concerning problem or compulsive gambling.

The Washington state affiliate of the National Council on Problem Gambling offers a toll-free help line as well as other services for the problem gambler. The Gambling Commission, the Lottery Commission and the Horse Racing Commission contribute to the annual support of the state council's operations. At least three-quarters of the tribes operating casinos in Washington have made some contribution to the council.

All revenue from the sale of tickets and shares for the various lottery games and all other revenue is deposited into the state lottery account. Moneys in this account must be used for the payment of prizes (a minimum of 45 percent), operation and maintenance of the lottery, the purchase and promotion of lottery games, and the payment of agent compensation. A portion of the moneys in this account is deposited in the state general fund. An obsolete reference to the use of lottery funds for the housing trust fund is contained in current law.

Summary of Bill: The Washington State Gambling Commission is directed to implement a compulsive gambling education and awareness program. Expenditures are authorized from the state lottery account as part of the lottery advertising budget to fund this program.

Reference to deposits from the lottery account to the housing trust fund is deleted.

Appropriation: \$150,000 from the state lottery account to the Gambling Commission for the 1997-99 biennium.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Compulsive gambling is an addiction that impacts the entire community, not just the families and friends of the problem/compulsive gambler. We need to provide information to problem gamblers and their loved ones regarding this addiction. Mental health providers need to be educated about this addiction and how to identify and treat it. With these additional funds, the current program at the State Council on Problem Gambling could be expanded.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Gary Hansen, State Council on Problem Gambling; Jeanne Benson, citizen; Carrie Tellefson, Gambling Commission; Roger Wilson, Lottery Commission; Steve Downen, Recreational Gaming Association; Vito Chiechi, Licensed Beverage Association.