

HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

HB 1625

Brief Description: Authorizing use of lottery moneys to fund education countering compulsive gambling.

Sponsors: Wood and Clements

Hearing: February 8, 1999

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Gambling Commission to implement a program to increase awareness and education about compulsive gambling.
- Authorizes an appropriation of \$300,000 from the lottery account to the Gambling Commission to implement the program.

BACKGROUND:

Since 1992, several studies and reports have focused attention on the issue of problem gambling. The Senate Commerce & Labor Committee has produced a report on compulsive gambling. In 1993, the state Lottery Commission funded a study on problem gambling among adults and adolescents. An update of the earlier study will be completed in 1999.

The Washington state affiliate of the National Council on Problem Gambling offers a toll-free help line as well as other educational services for the problem gambler. The Council also works to raise the awareness of gambling addiction among professionals involved in treatment. The Council does not provide actual treatment.

In December 1993, the Legislative Task Force on Gambling reported that there are a limited number of mental health professionals in this state who have specific training on the identification and treatment of compulsive gambling. There are no publicly or privately funded inpatient or outpatient treatment programs for compulsive gamblers in Washington. Gamblers Anonymous has had a presence in Washington since 1961.

The Gambling Commission, the Lottery Commission and the Horse Racing Commission contribute to the annual support of the state council's operations. Many of the tribes operating casinos in Washington have made some contribution to the council.

Expenditures from the state lottery account must be used for specified purposes such as the payment of prizes (a minimum of 45 percent), the operation and maintenance of the lottery, the purchase and promotion of lottery games, and the payment of agent compensation. A portion of the money in this account is deposited in the state general fund. There is no specific authorization to expend lottery account revenue for the purpose of supporting efforts to address the problem of compulsive gambling.

SUMMARY OF BILL:

The Washington State Gambling Commission is directed to implement a program to increase awareness and education about compulsive gambling.

Expenditures are authorized from the state lottery account as part of the lottery advertising budget for a program on prevention of and education on compulsive gambling. The sum of \$300,000 is appropriated from the lottery account to the Gambling Commission for this purpose.

APPROPRIATIONS: Three hundred thousand dollars is appropriated from the state lottery account to the Gambling Commission.

RULES AUTHORITY: The bill does contain provisions addressing the rule making powers of an agency.

FISCAL NOTE: Requested on February 5, 1999.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Ninety days after adjournment of a session in which bill is passed.