

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1625

As Reported By House Committee On:

Commerce & Labor

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

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

Sponsors: Representatives Wood, Clements, Conway, Fisher, D. Schmidt, Lantz, Pennington, Koster, Grant, Boldt, Radcliff, Wolfe, Gombosky, Cooper and McIntire.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Commerce & Labor: 2/8/99, 2/23/99 [DP].

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.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Clements, Republican Co-Chair; Conway, Democratic Co-Chair; Wood, Democratic Vice Chair; Hurst and McIntire.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives B. Chandler, Republican Vice Chair; Lisk and McMorris.

Staff: Pam Madson (786-7166).

Background:

Since 1992, several studies and reports have focused attention on the issue of problem gambling. In 1993, the State Lottery Commission funded a study on problem gambling among adults and adolescents. An update of this study will be completed in 1999.

There are efforts within the state to raise the awareness of problem gambling. 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 treating addictive behavior. The council does not provide actual treatment.

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 are directed to develop and display through their licensees and retail outlets, informational material on problem gambling. These agencies also 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.

Appropriation: \$300,00 is appropriated from the state lottery account to the Gambling Commission.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 5, 1999.

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

Testimony For: As a response to an increase in gambling activity in the state, there is an increasing need for services to individuals who have problems due to gambling. People need more information about the nature of problem gambling and how it can affect a person's life. More needs to be done. All segments of the gambling industry and other state agencies involved with gambling activity, not just the Lottery Commission, should participate in this effort. The agencies currently involved in gambling activity and regulation have been involved in educational efforts. None of the agencies have been involved in actual treatment or certifying professionals who do treatment. There may be other agencies with greater expertise in treatment of addictive behavior who should be involved in this effort. Agencies have provided some level of support to the State Council on Problem Gambling. The council's current activity highlights youth awareness of problem gambling. The council continues to increase awareness and training of treatment providers, but more needs to be done.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Alex Wood, prime sponsor; Jeanne Benson; Tami Nick; Gary Hanson, Washington State Council on Problem Gambling; Bob Benson, Washington State Lottery Commission; Ed Fleisher, Washington State Gambling Commission; Vito Chiechi, Recreational Gaming Association; and Todd Mielke, Spokane Area Gaming Association.