

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6523

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Labor, Commerce, Research & Development, February 1, 2006

**Title:** An act relating to increasing the minimum age for gambling.

**Brief Description:** Increasing the minimum age for gambling.

**Sponsors:** Senators Kohl-Welles, Hargrove, Benson, Roach, Fairley, Rasmussen and Kline.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Labor, Commerce, Research & Development: 1/26/06, 2/1/06 [DPS-WM].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, COMMERCE, RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6523 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Kohl-Welles, Chair; Franklin, Vice Chair; Parlette, Ranking Minority Member; Brown, Hewitt, Honeyford, Keiser and Prentice.

**Staff:** John Dziedzic (786-7784)

**Background:** The following activities are governed by statutes and rules relating to the Washington Horse Racing Commission, Washington State Gambling Commission (WSGC), and State Lottery Commission: parimutuel wagering on horse races, punch boards, pull tabs, amusement games, raffles, bingo, card games, dice or coin contests, sports pools, golfing and bowling sweepstakes, fishing derbies and turkey shoots, and scratch ticket and on-line lottery games. Amusement games are devices where merchandise prizes are awarded to a contestant where the outcome of the game materially depends on the skill of the contestant or contestants.

Persons under the age of 18 are barred by rule from wagering on horse races.

Minors are prohibited by statute and rule from wagering on activities regulated by the WSGC, except that, by rule: (1) a person under the age of 18 is permitted to sell raffle tickets, and may play bingo at agricultural fairs and school carnivals or when accompanied by an adult member of his or her immediate family or guardian; and (2) school-aged minors (between age 6 and 18) may play commercial amusement games at certain locations during specified times (non-school hours, etc.). "Minor" is not defined in the statutes or rules relating to the WSGC. However, unless otherwise specifically provided in statute, a person is deemed to be "of full age" for all purposes at 18 years of age. See RCW 26.28.010

A statute prohibits tickets or shares of a State Lottery game from being sold to any person under the age of 18, and makes it a misdemeanor to knowingly sell a lottery ticket to a person under 18.

**Summary of Substitute Bill:** Persons under the age of 21 are prohibited from wagering on activities regulated by the Gambling Commission in any part of A facility where alcohol for on-site consumption is sold or allowed. It is also unlawful to assist, participate with, or knowingly allow a person under 21 to wager on activities regulated by the Gambling Commissions. Amusement games are removed from regulation under the Gambling Act.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:** The original bill prohibited persons under the age of 21 from wagering on activities regulated by the Gambling Commission, Horse Racing Commission, or State Lottery Commission, and made it unlawful to assist, participate with, or knowingly allow a person under 21 to wager on activities regulated by the Horse Racing or Gambling Commissions.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

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

**Testimony For:** There is a huge social cost to gambling, especially for youth and those with low income. Gambling is the fastest growing addiction in America, with a disturbingly high incidence among younger people. There is too much easy access to gambling for younger people, from lottery game tickets at the convenience store counter to illegal internet gambling and underage gambling at minicasinos, card rooms, back yards and basements. It can become as bad as a \$200 a day drug habit, or worse, and it can start as innocently as buying scratch tickets as a social activity with family members.

**Testimony Against:** It is no longer necessary for the Gambling Commission to regulate amusement games.

**Testimony Other:** The Gambling Commission has taken no formal position on this bill, but recognizes that a clear policy statement benefits enforcement. There is a potentially significant fiscal impact to the Lottery Commission from reduced sales and costs of reprinting paper stock of existing supplies. It is questionable whether raising the minimum age will solve the problem, or merely motivate younger, computer-savvy people to gamble more on the internet. If there is to be a lower minimum age to gamble, it should be applied to all forms of gambling.

**Who Testified:** PRO: Norm Maleng, King County Prosecutor; Jennifer McAusland, Second Chance Washington.

CON: Vito Chiechi, Chiechi & Assoc.

OTHER: Lynn Maier, Lottery Commission; Neal Nunamaker, Gambling Commission; Steve Lindstrom, Michels Development; Dolores Chiechi, Recreation Gaming Association.