

## PREDATORY GAMBLERS ARE KNOCKING ON LEGISLATORS' DOORS!

Horse racetrack owners in Ohio looking for a government handout to save their failing businesses have succeeded in getting the House of Representatives' #2 Republican Lou Blessing from Cincinnati and Democrat Todd Book from Portsmouth to prepare a bill legalizing slot machines at Ohio's seven racetracks. Their bill would form a partnership with the Lottery Commission because they contend that would allow them to begin immediately without a statewide vote of the people. At this date, Governor Strickland and Senate President Bill Harris have repeatedly said that they oppose an expansion of gambling in Ohio. They both realize that gambling revenue that comes primarily from addicted gamblers and low-income bettors is not a sound foundation for an economic future for Ohio.

However, the Senate has just received a biennial budget that is nearly \$1 billion out of balance and lobbyists for the racetrack owners are trying to convince legislators that millions can be added to the next budget at the same time saving the racing industry. The unanswered question is, if slot machines are such a financial winner for the state, why wouldn't the legislature allow the Lottery Commission to operate it and keep all the revenues for the state? The answer is that legislators are elected by the people and they have spoken already in four elections that the negatives are too great to open their communities to slot machines 365 days a year 24 hours a day.

Another concern is that Rep. Book convinced House Democrats to slip into the House budget a racetrack study amendment that enables the conference committee made up of only six members to vote the gambling at racetracks into the final bill at the last minute where all other members may not debate the amendment. The final vote for all other 126 members is yes or no on the whole budget compromise. This means that only six legislators will decide if voters will be denied their Constitutional right to vote no on predatory gambling in Ohio.

Not long after horse track owners tried to grab the "golden goose", Ohio bar owners offered their own proposal to give the state 40% while they intend to keep 60% for themselves. Their plan would require only a vote in a local precinct to be allowed to begin slot machine in that neighborhood. This is the same process used to determine Sunday liquor sales. A precinct vote on the crack cocaine of gambling is totally without merit.

"People were bringing their little children to him to have him touch them, but the disciples were scolding them for this. "Jesus became indignant when he noticed it and said to them: "Let the children come to me and do not hinder them. It is to just such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.

(Mark 10: 13-14 NAB)

**PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING:**  
Because of budget difficulties, our staff has decided that we must reduce expenses. In July, we will begin distributing my Legislative Brief only by email or by down-loading from our website. For those who have no computer availability, I will still send a paper copy with a \$15 annual payment for mailing. Please forward to Ximena Jones your Email address to enable us to prepare for July. [xjones@ohcouncilchs.org](mailto:xjones@ohcouncilchs.org)

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Do they seriously want us to believe that the only people who will experience negative results caused by the slots live in a small election precinct? Studies indicate that gambling problems impact bettors in a 50-mile radius of their location. This plan would authorize 80,000 slot machines in Ohio. Estimates of revenues for Ohio government are often greatly exaggerated. Over saturation of casinos is indicated by 27 casinos within states touching Ohio and half within a one-hour drive. Predatory gambling would have a drastic financial impact on charitable gambling at church schools, volunteer firemen, veteran halls and lodges.

Meanwhile, citizens beware, Penn National casino gambling predators are circulating petitions and asking voters to sign if they want to stop casino gambling. But the reality is if people don't sign, they would never get enough signatures to qualify for the ballot. Predators try to deceive people to enable them to become the sole monopoly in Ohio's Constitution. Less than one year ago, Penn National was running television ads protesting My OhioNow wanting to become a private monopoly and short-changing Ohioans with a 30% of the total gross revenues. Today, only six months later, Penn National is petitioning to be the monopoly and only offering counties and schools 33%. This is the same company that pays their home state, Pennsylvania 55%. Further, Penn National was fined \$800,000 in Illinois for marketing to problem gamblers who had already voluntarily banned themselves from entering their casino—a self-exclusion list. The casino obtained a list of names from a company that operates ATM's at Illinois casinos because these are the people most likely to lose control of their spending. All the above, should clearly indicate why Penn National should be

defined as a predatory gambling institution.

If voters were to read the language of the Penn National casino petition carefully, they would be surprised to learn that there is no deadline for building any of the four casinos that their sales pitch claims they will build. In fact, let's look at their plan logically. It makes good political sense to advertise building casinos in Ohio's four largest cities. It helps them collect the required signatures to be placed on the November ballot. It increases the number of voters who may be persuaded to say yes. But after the election, if they win and are placed in Ohio's Constitution they would be the only casino company permitted to operate in Ohio. Penn National owns Argosy Casino in Lawrenceburg, Indiana only 30 minutes from Cincinnati and they are spending \$350 million to renovate it. It has been said that 60% of their clientele comes from Ohio; why would they build a competitor in Cincinnati? In Toledo, they own a racetrack that would probably close if a casino were built there. Additionally, they are trying to obtain the bankrupt casino in Detroit that would need Ohioans from the Toledo area only an hour away. With the saturation of gambling spots close to Ohio and a troubled economy that is adversely impacting casinos across the country, logic says the best corporate move by Penn National is to build only one casino in Columbus and because of their Constitutional monopoly they can keep all other competition out.

Faith leaders please consider joining our coalition to oppose all these predatory forms of gambling that receives over 70% of their revenues from low-income and addicted gamblers. Begin immediately to warn your congregations of the misrepresentations by those circulating petitions in your communities. †††