

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LEGISLATORS FROM GAMING STATES  
COMMITTEE ON RESPONSIBLE GAMING  
DUCK KEY, FLORIDA  
FRIDAY, JANUARY 12, 2007  
DRAFT MINUTES

The Committee on Responsible Gaming of the National Council of Legislators from Gaming States (NCLGS) met at the Hawk's Cay Resort in Duck Key, Florida, on Friday, January 12, 2007, at 8:45 a.m.

Representative Chris Sainato from Pennsylvania, Chair of the Committee, presided.

Other members of the Committee present were:

Rep. Kevin Ryan, CT  
Rep. Vincent Lofink, DE  
Rep. Bill Oberle, DE  
Sen. Steven Geller, FL  
Rep. John Evans, PA  
Rep. Tim Solobay, PA

Other legislators present were:

Rep. Helene Keeley, DE  
Rep. Joseph Miro, DE  
Rep. Pamela Thornburg, DE  
Rep. John Viola, DE  
Rep. Anthony Lourey, MN  
Sen. Ann Rest, MN  
Sen. Richard Lerblance, OK

Others present were:

Susan Nolan, Nolan Associates, NCLGS Executive Director  
Nicholas Brozean, Nolan Associates, NCLGS Assistant Legislative Coordinator

## MINUTES

The Committee voted unanimously to accept, as submitted, the minutes of its June 2, 2006, meeting in Boston, Massachusetts.

## STATE AND INDUSTRY RESPONSIBLE GAMING INITIATIVES

Mr. Keith Whyte, Executive Director of the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) said responsible gaming as defined by the American Gaming Association (AGA) is any strategy, policy or program instituted by a gaming company to proactively address problem gambling and/or underage gambling issues. He said problem gambling and underage gambling are two major concentrations of responsible gaming.

Mr. Whyte said state and tribal government, gaming industry, consumers, and advocates are four groups accountable for responsible gaming. He said state and tribal governments protect the health and welfare of their citizens, and it is their responsibility to protect all the citizens, not just gamblers. He said it is the gaming industry's responsibility to provide their product in a responsible manner.

Mr. Whyte said that consumers are often ignored in the equation and their role should be to educate themselves, leading to responsible gambling. He said NCPG is a national advocate for programs to assist problem gambling among families. He said the NCPG is not out to ban gambling, but to help people who have gambling problems.

Mr. Whyte said NCPG believes that these four groups act as a condition of licensure, and need to be involved and maintain public statistics, which should be periodically reviewed. He said numerous responsible gambling groups exist, but many do not have statistical figures. He said without figures the purpose of the group will and cannot be effective.

Mr. Whyte said two new responsible gaming initiatives taking place are World Lottery Association (WLA) Social Responsibility Standards and Swiss Social Concept. He said both of these innovative initiatives are not happening in the United States, but are occurring on an international level. He said the WLA now has the hallmark and benchmark standard in responsible gambling, but unfortunately most of the US lotteries do not participate in the WLA.

Mr. Whyte said the WLA has seven steps to protect the public, the most important among them is providing the public with the ability to make informed choices. He said WLA members take steps to protect the public, which is not only their responsibility, but also the responsibility of regulators and the public themselves.

Mr. Whyte said it is up to the public to make an informed choice, which cannot be done because not enough information is provided to the public to accurately and effectively assess the odds. He said most people expect to lose, but most people could not tell you how much they expect to lose and why they expect to lose. He said it is also important not just to have a code, but to have a code that is reported on publicly and identifies problems.

Mr. Whyte said Europeans have been gambling for awhile and have introduced high stakes or casino gaming, which spurred the Swiss Social Concept. He said the Swiss Social Concept suggests responsible gaming programs need to be designed by psychologists because it is a mental health issue. He said most responsible gaming programs are done by policy advocates, industry executives, or public relations personnel, but the behavior that is trying to be addressed is a public health disorder of the mind, therefore it helps to have a psychologist on staff, which the Swiss mandate.

Mr. Whyte said each Swiss casino is required to provide public access to player data, which is important available data on responsible gaming. He said most people working with responsible gaming are not very informed. He said providing more information to people will make them better able to design an intervention for problem gamblers, which account for three percent of gamblers. Mr. Whyte said this data will help provide an answer to the reason behind the

separation between the 97 percent of people who can gamble responsibly and the three percent who cannot.

#### USE OF INTERNET TO DELIVER BETTER RESPONSIBLE GAMING

Mr. Whyte said responsible gaming websites providing information include [www.gamblingmyths.org](http://www.gamblingmyths.org) (IA Myth & Fact); [www.problempoker.com](http://www.problempoker.com) (ProblemPoker); [www.dontbetonit.org](http://www.dontbetonit.org) (NCAA); [www.masscompulsivegambling.org](http://www.masscompulsivegambling.org) (Your First Step to Change); [www.ncpgambling.org](http://www.ncpgambling.org) (NCPG, NORC Diagnostic Screen for Gambling Problems-Self Administered). He said these sites have a variety of information on problem gambling with consequences, and some of these sites are understandable for children.

#### RESPONSIBLE GAMING MACHINE MODIFICATIONS

Mr. Whyte said responsible gaming machine modifications are being done to make playing slots and gambling machines problem gambling effective, and to encourage responsible playing or to reduce harmful play. He said many modifications are taking place outside the US. He said these include modifications to speed of play, bill acceptors, bet size, clocks, mandatory cash-out or break in play, and warning messages.

Mr. Whyte said the Manitoba Program has made many machine modifications including permanent on-screen clocks, countdown clocks showing time remaining in time limit, coin-in shown as cash not credits, player choice on time limits, pop-up time reminders, advance warning of mandatory cash-out, mandatory cash-out after time allotment reached, on-screen helpline message, helpline message printable on ticket format, responsible gaming button and information pages, stop reels option removed from all games, set speed option removed from screens, bill acceptor limited to \$20 bills, and a \$60 maximum for current sessions.

Mr. Whyte said it is expected that these machine modifications will not have an effect on problem gamblers, but will provide information for the future.

Mr. Whyte said New South Wales hired several professors to evaluate certain machine modification methods in a controlled manner. He said after the evaluation they found a minor impact has been received using on-screen messages causing breaks in play, and a substantial impact was found to occur due to the reduction in maximum bet size for any one game.

Mr. Whyte said the critical feature of problem gambling is a hypnotic effect, which occurs when people get into a zone while losing track of time and money spent on gambling. He said mandatory breaks disrupt the hypnotic effect and have some impact on problem gamblers, but have very little effect on recreational gamblers.

Mr. Whyte said Nova Scotia responsible gaming initiatives include shutting down at midnight (because research showed the majority of problem gambling occurs between the hours of three and six a.m.), reducing terminals by a third, and removing the stop button. He said these initiatives resulted in a 30 percent success rate among problem gambling subjects, decreasing their losses by \$100 per week and time spent in gambling by about two hours. He said problem gamblers also shifted their play to casinos that did not have tight restrictions.

Mr. Whyte said putting messages on poker machines has been successful. He said this included questions such as: Have you spent more money on gambling than you intended? Are you gambling longer than planned? Have you felt bad or guilty about your gambling? He said this has been successful because such questions act as triggers for gamblers to evaluate their behavior and go get help.

#### NEW APPROACHES TO SELF-EXCLUSION, E.G., GLOBAL DATABASE

Mr. Whyte said self-exclusion is a method for an individual to take responsibility for his/her own actions. He said self-exclusion was originally part of a therapeutic process wherein a person with successful treatment could prevent a relapse period. He said now people enter self-exclusion and try to get treatment after a problem has been started. He said these people are setting themselves up for failure because they are only removing themselves from a certain venue or jurisdiction and are not treating the underlying problem.

Mr. Whyte said it is necessary and easier to prevent a problem rather than treat it. He said self-exclusion is not a preventative measure when people have a problem before they enlist. He said self-exclusion does little to stop problem gamblers from gambling and dealing with their problem. He said problem gamblers who sign up for self-exclusion still gamble and are not caught unless they win big jackpots.

Mr. Whyte said identification using surveillance technology has very little impact. He said the use of players clubs or smart cards has been successful, but only one casino in all of the US, a casino in Missouri, uses them.

Mr. Whyte said NCPG at present is exploring a program using the internet for self-exclusion purposes. He said one list would be made available on the internet for self-exclusion worldwide and gaming operators with internet connections could subscribe to the list and check names entering venues. He said this eliminates jurisdictional barriers and applies to anyone regardless of what platform they gamble on. He said in Nevada it is necessary to go to every casino to be added to self-exclusion lists.

Mr. Whyte said problem gambling policies are being developed that do not have standards or evaluation of those standards. He said policy does exist but a need exists for effective policy. He said NCPG has 35 years of experience in responsible gaming and is not only an advocate, but also an ally, and will be a resource for all parties.

Ms. Susan Nolan, Executive Director of NCLGS, asked a question regarding help lines and treatment programs. She asked if treatment programs are becoming more common.

Mr. Whyte said 23 states have publicly funded problem gambling programs, but help lines are almost a complete failure. He said the way self-exclusion is provided causes people to become addicted and desperate for help. He said within six years the NCPG had 1.1 million people call their help lines.

Mr. Whyte said publicly funded programs lack funding for treatment from the state and must utilize existing resources. He said over the past five years NCPG has seen the amount of phone calls to the helpline double, however funding for treatment services still remains low.

Mr. Whyte said legislators and industry needs to be committed to protect the health and welfare of constituents, and this has failed in terms of problem gambling. He said it is not the industry's job to help treat problem gamblers it is a state and federal government issue. He said while the state authorizes and collects funding from gambling, commitment to address the downside has been very weak. Mr. Whyte said if state and federal governments are not helping problem gamblers, a problem gambler can only hope to live in a state committed to problem gambling efforts.

Ms. Nolan asked if a state exists that is believed to have a model program for other states to follow.

Mr. Whyte said a public and private partnership needs to exist, and that industry can help contribute. He said Oregon is recognized as one of the leaders, and Louisiana has a relatively decent partnership, but lacks proper funding.

Ms. Lisa Pertzoff, Executive Director of the Delaware Council on Gambling Problems, Inc. said Delaware has the best per capita funding for problem gambling in the country. She said Delaware has a helpline and provides free treatment.

In response to a question from Sen. Richard Lerblance regarding the main reason problem gamblers give for asking for treatment, Mr. Whyte said that most people who seek help for gambling problems decide to go with abstinence although some just want to reduce their gambling habits. He said the studies have shown 65 percent of people in Iowa who have gone through treatment in a six month follow-up have been found to either quit gambling altogether or greatly reduce gambling habits.

In response to a question from Keith London, Commissioner of the City of Hallandale Beach, as to how information on responsible gambling should be spread to consumers, Mr. Whyte said the closer problem gamblers get to the decision to gamble or to the point of sale, the less effective information will be. He said prevention education is necessary and should start early with a youth program on the law and potential damages relating to problem gambling. He said a great source for prevention education is the internet.

#### ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m.