

NEWS BRIEF

NEW PRESIDENT TAKES THE WSCPG HELM

The WSCPG Board of Directors recently elected a new President, Richard Lobel. Richard first joined the Board in November, 2000. Welcome to the helm, Richard.

Richard replaces Frank Miller, who resigned as President because of time commitments. Frank continues to help the WSCPG as a Board Member.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE WSCPG — WHERE DO THEY GO?

Contributions to the WSCPG are used for Public Awareness, Youth Awareness, Educating Treatment Providers, and Helpline Services. The WSCPG is proud of the fact that its administrative costs are low; usually 8% to 10% of its annual budget, never over 12%. When you contribute to the WSCPG, your donation directly supports our work in addressing Problem Gambling.

We would like to thank the following contributor's for their financial support in 2003. The contributors are listed in descending order of contribution amounts received:

- The Muckleshoot Indian Tribe
- Swinomish Indian Tribe and Northern Lights Casino
- The Recreational Gaming Association
- Kalispel Indian Tribe and Northern Quest Casino
- Jimmy Jacks, Inc.
- Cleopatra's Cable Bridge Casino
- The Upper Skagit Indian Tribe
- The Lummi Indian Tribe and Silver Reef Casino
- New Phoenix & Last Frontier Casinos
- Community Foundation of Southwest Washington
- Kegler's Casino
- Lake Bowl, Inc.
- AAA Bowls Unlimited
- Cindy Reed
- Blue Mountain Casino
- Drift on Inn Roadhouse Casino
- Compulsive Gambling Foundation, Inc.

Thank you for your contribution and support of the Council and its activities.

Mission Statement

The Washington State Council on Problem Gambling is dedicated to increasing public awareness of the condition of problem gambling and increasing the availability of services for problem gamblers and their families. The Council is neither for nor against gambling.

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EVALUATION PROVES PROBLEM GAMBLING TREATMENT PROGRAM A GREAT SUCCESS - SO WHY WAS IT CUT?

Professional evaluation of the one-year Problem Gambling Treatment Program, which was administered by the WSCPGE and funded through the Lottery, proves the program a great success. Two-thirds of the clients showed significant improvements; one-third abstained from gambling and another third greatly reduced their gambling. Clients reduced their financial problems, illegal behavior, and conflicts.

In spite of this remarkable success, the Legislature failed to reauthorize the program because of the State's budget problems. This will prove penny wise and pound foolish. A Congressional study found that each Pathological Gambler costs society – you, the taxpayer – over \$10,000 from bankruptcies, family dislocation, welfare, unemployment, criminal activity, and other costs. The Gamblers in the problem Gambling Treatment Program were treated for less than \$1,553 each. That is a savings of over \$8,440 each!

When funding ended, 90 percent of the Problem Gamblers in treatment were forced to drop out. They could not afford to continue. How many of those clients will resume their gambling at society's expense?

The Problem Gambling Treatment Program worked! It helped Problem Gamblers and their families stay together. It helped get Problem Gamblers off the unemployment lines and back to work — as taxpaying citizens. It saved money.

So, why was it cut?

The full Evaluation Report and a summary are available on the WSCPGE website at: www.wscpg.org.

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE PROGRAM

- Treatment is effective in addressing Problem Gambling since two-thirds of the clients significantly improved.
- Some treatment is better than no treatment; even clients who dropped-out showed some improvements.
- There was a significant reduction in financial problems, illegal behavior, family conflicts, & there were improvements in mental health and life skills.
- It can be assumed that client improvements resulted in reduced costs to society through reduced bankruptcy, reduced family breakup, reduced legal costs, and job retention – Treatment saves money.
- Subsidized treatment is necessary for most clients as demonstrated by the 90% drop-out rate immediately after funding cuts.

TESTIMONIALS FOR THE PROBLEM GAMBLING TREATMENT PROGRAM

"I got out of jail in a nightgown with pouring rain. I walked around and felt so low I wanted to commit suicide. I found a phone number... and called... I am going through the state pilot program..." It "... saved my life..."

Faye

"I have over the course of several years sought out whatever help was available... My insurance wouldn't help with any of the cost. I am very hopeful now that I finally have the opportunity to find the help I have sought out and needed for several years."

Jackie

"... My gambling losses exceeded \$200,000. I also lost my job, seriously contemplated suicide and nearly lost my home and family... I voluntarily called the 1-800-547-6133 number and was referred to... one of the 24 counselors... I receive[d] professional counseling specific to my gambling addiction... The help I received in that professional environment has been instrumental in ... stopping all gambling, and secondly, my abstinence. Of equal significance is the impact that counseling had on my ability to return to work."

Ely

A LETTER FROM THE NEW WSCPG PRESIDENT

What hope exists for that portion of the population of Washington State who are or will become pathological (compulsive) gamblers? What hope exists that the various interested groups, such as government, tribal and non-tribal gaming interests, the treatment and recovering communities can and will work together to stem the tide of this devastating problem? What hope exists that the Washington State Council on Problem Gambling (WSCPG) will continue to exist and to be able to continue providing its traditional services such as a toll free help line, public awareness, training for treatment professionals, youth training, among others?

These are the issues facing the WSCPG today. These same issues have been at the forefront of the WSCPG's work ever since it came into being. However, the outlook today is disconcerting at best and downright dismal at worst. Funding for the WSCPG from all sources is down, the State of Washington's foray into public funding for the treatment of problem gamblers ended after a one year pilot project, and more and more cities and counties are seeing gambling as the answer to budgetary problems without also taking measures to alleviate the problems caused by the ever increasing legal means of gambling.

Much of the time the best interests of the divergent groups making up the gaming industry are at odds with each other. In the area of problem gambling, that is not the case. No one benefits from compulsive gambling. Families fall apart, people lose jobs, commit crimes, seek public dollars, and generally go from being productive members of society to very needy individuals. Governments, who are trying to increase revenues

through gambling, end up paying out more dollars in unemployment benefits, assistance to families and individuals, court costs and other associated dollars. Gaming establishments have to deal with bad checks, increased criminality, reputations for causing but not dealing with problems.

I know first hand of what I speak. Let me introduce you to the newest President of the WSCPG. For most of my life I was an active problem gambler. From childhood all bets I made were excessive and an inordinate amount of my time was spent on gambling. Despite this affliction, I became a well educated and fairly prominent member of society. In the early 1980s gambling took much greater control of my life and things spun completely out of control. I lost relationships, lost all financial means and goods and became an antisocial person living only for the next bet. During that time I was also involved in the gaming industry, at one point becoming the manager of one of the largest card rooms in the world. I have seen problem gambling from many sides. Since 1996 I have not gambled at all and since about 1999 have been actively involved with the WSCPG. In August of this year I was elected President after our extremely active and competent Frank Miller stepped down from that role. The Council owes Frank a great debt for his past and continuing efforts on our behalf.

My personal philosophy is totally in line with that of the Council. I am not anti-gambling. The fact that there is a minority of people who, like me, cannot enjoy the recreation of gambling without having serious consequences does not mean that gambling should be made illegal, or that it is immoral or that anyone other than the individual is responsible for his/her actions. However, those who benefit from gambling have a

responsibility to do whatever they can to alleviate the social problems caused by it.

Getting back to the present picture, is all bleak? I think not. The Board of Directors of the Council is now larger and more diverse than ever before. We have just added as a member Ruby Takushi, PhD, a licensed psychologist in private practice. We welcome the addition of Ruby who has been working hard in support of the Council's activities even before she joined the BOD. The Council is in the process of seeking additional funding from the Gambling Commission for the furtherance of trainings we can and will provide to schools, professionals, and other venues. Several gaming establishments are continuing their financial support of our mission. Overall, however, the Council's revenues have decreased dramatically. We need the continuing and increasing financial support of our entire constituency. Now is the time that government, tribal gaming and non-tribal gaming interests, and trade associations must come together in showing understanding of the problem and support of the solution.

WSCPGE SERVICES CRUCIAL TO THE STATE

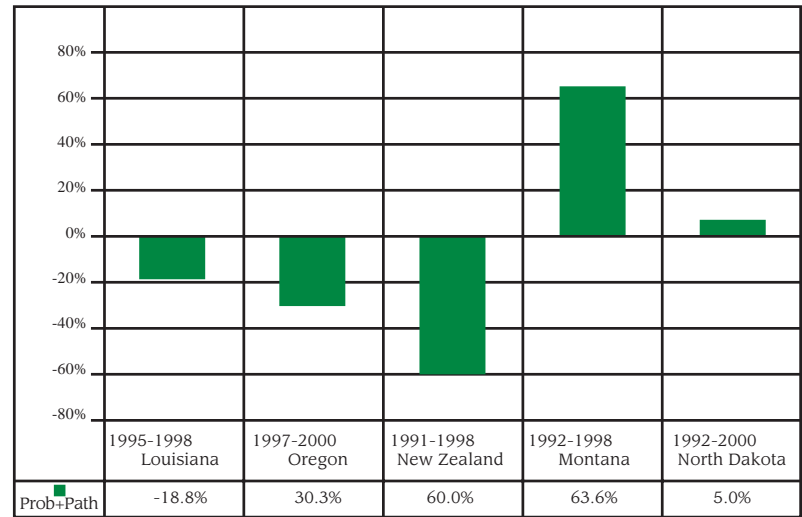
As gambling expands in Washington State, the work of the WSCPGE becomes more and more important. Addressing Problem Gambling can keep Problem Gambling from increasing. In fact, evidence suggests that with the proper programs the rate of Problem Gambling can be reduced, even when gambling is expanded.

Studies comparing the rates of Problem Gambling have found that states and nations with good, comprehensive programs addressing Problem Gambling have seen a reduction in rates.

In the graph below, legal gambling expanded in each case. However, those with comprehensive programs — Louisiana, Oregon, and New Zealand — reduced their Problem gambling rates. Those with few programs — Montana and North Dakota — saw increased rates.

If a comprehensive program to address Problem Gambling — including Public and Youth Awareness, Helpline Services, Professional Training, and Treatment — were fully funded, Washington State would certainly see reductions also.

Comparing Changes in Magnitude of Problem Gambling in Five Jurisdictions*



*Problem and pathological gambling is defined as endorsing three or more items on the current South Oaks Gambling Screen.

**Provided by Rachel Volberg, Ph.D.

Mark Your Calendars

Problem Gambling Awareness Week March 8-15, 2004

Problem Gambling Awareness Week will be centered on increasing awareness among family members and primary care health care providers and various events will occur both within Washington State and across the nation. The WSCPGE is working with the Washington State Lottery and their public relations firm, Publicis, to create a series of public awareness events and strategies to continue to build on the success of last year's endeavors.

Emphasis will be on media exposure through print and radio/TV public service announcements, billboard advertising and appearances on local and statewide news programs. Providers will again be offering free problem gambling screenings. Call the Helpline, 1-800-547-6133, for more information. Efforts are being made to schedule orientation seminars with mental health, alcohol and drug and primary care treatment centers.

The WSCPGE will be hosting a gaming industry roundtable and fund raising dinner during Problem Gambling Awareness Week. A special emphasis will be to continue the collaborative relationship between the industry, governmental and legislative agencies, treatment providers and the recovering community.

If you or your agency would like to participate in this year's Problem Gambling Awareness week, please call the Helpline. Various informational kits will be available and awareness presentations can be scheduled in advance. If you would like to support this effort we look forward to working with you.

WSCPGE News Brief

Washington State Council on Problem Gambling

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