



Florida Family Policy Council

Ideas, News and Information

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"It represents a significant -- if not the largest -- expansion of gambling in Florida's history," said Nathan Dunn, a vice president of the Florida Family Policy Council... "This kind of gambling expansion should not be brought up at this late of date in the session." - Orlando Sentinel

Tax relief? Try gambling

Lawmakers consider gaming to help them cut property taxes.

By STEVE BOUSQUET
Published May 1, 2007, St. Petersburg Times

TALLAHASSEE - A major expansion of gambling in Florida emerged Monday as a possible new piece of the property tax cut puzzle that has defied resolution for two months.

On 30 minutes' public notice, a House council passed a bill that would allow 11 existing gambling sites in Florida to add 1,000 coin- or token-operated video lottery terminals each. Three affected sites are in the Tampa Bay area: Derby Lane in St. Petersburg, Tampa Bay Downs and Tampa Greyhound Track.

Backed by a coalition of veteran lobbyists, the video lottery idea surfaced at a time when negotiations on property tax cuts are at impasse, with Floridians demanding relief. The new machines would pump at least \$500-million in tax revenue into state coffers each year, which adds much-needed flexibility to tax cut negotiations going on right now.

The 26-page video lottery provision was tacked onto an obscure bill HB 1551 giving the Florida Lottery authority to trademark its games. The machines allow gamblers to play a form of bingo against others at the same location.

Four of the gambling sites are in Miami-Dade, including a jai-alai fronton and the shuttered thoroughbred track in Hialeah. Others are in Jacksonville, West Palm Beach, Naples and Ocala. Unlike thousands of new slot machines at four Broward County parimutuels, the new sites would not be subject to public approval in a local referendum.

The room, filled with lobbyists for gambling interests, erupted in knowing laughter at the link to property tax reduction. Full story here: http://www.sptimes.com/2007/05/01/State/Tax_relief_Try_gambli.shtml

President's Comments- This development underscores several points.

1) We firmly maintain that social, moral and cultural Issues transcend the importance of economic issues. Social and moral issues define who we are as a people and as families. As social conservatives, we must fight this mind set which elevates economic issues over moral issues. *Who we are* is always more important than *how much* we get. The social cost of gambling on Florida's families and the poor it preys on is too high to trade for temporal economic relief.

2) This was a Republican led and Republican dominated House that passed out this bad gambling bill.

3) Our Vice President of Public Policy, Nathan Dunn was the only pro-family advocate present at this surprise meeting and the only person in a packed room who rose and spoke in opposition to this bad bill. This underscores the importance of having a full time presence in Tallahassee.

4) The substantive provisions of this bills are bad enough but the procedural way in which this bill was slipped in at the last minute was deplorable. There was very little public notice and this is not how the deliberative process of a representative democracy should be run.

5) This surprise bill, HB 1551, now goes to the floor of the House of Representatives and may be voted on as early as Wednesday, May 2. This along with the three gambling expansion bills passed by the Florida House on April 30 is very disappointing. You can see how your representative voted on these bills below. These bills will now go to the Governor's office. The Governor received an unprecedented amount of campaign money from the gambling industry. We will appeal to him to veto these bills and any legislation that expands gambling in Florida. The votes in the House do not appear to exist to override a gubernatorial veto, if one was enacted. We will keep you updated as the governor begins to consider these bills.

HOW YOUR LOCAL STATE LEGISLATOR VOTED:

HB 1047 Slot Machine Gaming (Rep. Seiler)

This bill expands the number of slot machines and hours of operation at pari-mutuel facilities in Broward County. It also allows ATM machines closer to these facilities.

PASSED Yeas: 61 Nays: 52

How Representatives Voted: [http://www.myfloridahouse.com/Sections/Bills/floorvote.aspx?](http://www.myfloridahouse.com/Sections/Bills/floorvote.aspx?VoteId=7820&BillId=35967&)

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HB 1377 Cardrooms (Rep. Holloway)

(Same as SB 752)

This bill expands the days and hours of operation of cardrooms at pari-mutual facilities in Florida. It also increases the betting limits.

PASSED: Yeas: 77 Nays: 38

How Representatives Voted: [http://www.myfloridahouse.com/Sections/Bills/floorvote.aspx?](http://www.myfloridahouse.com/Sections/Bills/floorvote.aspx?VoteId=7821&BillId=35084&)

[VoteId=7821&BillId=35084&](http://www.myfloridahouse.com/Sections/Bills/floorvote.aspx?VoteId=7821&BillId=35084&)

HB 191 Bingo (Rep. Dean)

(Same as SB 500)

This bill expands the game of bingo to include instant bingo tickets which are similar to lottery tickets.

PASSED Yeas: 78 Nays: 38

How Representatives Voted: [http://www.myfloridahouse.com/Sections/Bills/floorvote.aspx?](http://www.myfloridahouse.com/Sections/Bills/floorvote.aspx?VoteId=7822&BillId=34459&)

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