

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 18, 2010

PROBLEM GAMBLING PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

Dear Colleague:

Approximately 6 to 9 million American adults are problem gamblers, according to the National Council on Problem Gambling. Problem gambling includes behavior patterns that can destroy a person's career and financial standing, disrupt marriages and personal relationships, and encourage participation in criminal activity.

Over the past decade, gaming and gambling have grown in the United States, and the recent economic downturn only compounds this situation as many states consider relaxing gaming laws in an effort to raise state revenues. At the same time, the Federal government and most states have devoted very little, if any, resources to the prevention and treatment of compulsive gambling. Currently, no Federal agency is responsible for coordinating efforts to treat problem gambling.


The *Comprehensive Problem Gambling Act* would begin to address this deficiency by designating the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) as the lead agency responsible for handling problem gambling issues, and coordinating Federal action. The legislation would authorize SAMSHA to conduct research, develop guidelines for effective prevention and treatment programs, and provide assistance for community-based services. In addition, this legislation would authorize \$14.2 million in annual funding for the following purposes within the Department of Health and Human Services:

- Provide competitive grants for state agencies, non-profits, universities, and tribal governments to provide treatment and prevention programs
- Coordinate a public awareness campaign

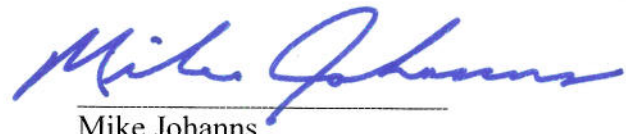
This investment accounts for a mere one-fourth of one percent of the annual Federal tax revenues from legalized gambling, which has grown into an approximately \$100 billion a year industry. The responsible action is to invest a modest amount in prevention and treatment efforts.

While there may be disagreement over the degree to which gambling should be regulated, there is little question that we can do more to minimize the negative effects of problem gambling. To become a cosponsor or obtain more information about this bill, please contact Courtney Thompson in Senator Merkley's office at 4-7648 or Lea Stueve in Senator Johanns's office at 4-9591.

Sincerely,



Jeff Merkley
United States Senator



Mike Johanns
United States Senator