

***National Council on Problem Gambling
Federal Affairs Committee Call to Action!!***

We need YOUR help!

WHO

NCPG Affiliates, NCPG Members, recovery community, researchers, clinicians, probation officers, prevention professionals, behavioral health professionals, attorneys, professional associations, and anyone affected by, or concerned about, problem gambling.

WHAT

Build support for HR 2906, Comprehensive Problem Gambling Act of 2009, through meetings, conversations and communication with your Federal legislators.

WHEN

August, 2009

WHERE

Meetings conducted in your state and local community with your Congressional representatives.

WHY

- Requests from constituents and/or state residents have the greatest impact on Members of Congress.
- Passage of this initial legislation will establish federal policy and funding for programs and services to address problem gambling.
- Accomplishing this goal will assist all of us in our local efforts to minimize the impact of problem gambling in our communities.

HOW

1. Prepare to advocate for the Comprehensive Problem Gambling Act
 - a. Read HR 2906, the Comprehensive Problem Gambling Act (CPGA) – one read through will be beneficial.
 - b. Review the HR 2906 talking points.
 - c. Visit www.ncpgambling.org/advocacy to review tips and suggestions for communicating with legislators.
2. Contact your Representatives and Senators to request a meeting.
 - a. To find your legislator:
 - i. For Representatives, go to:
http://www.house.gov/house/MemberWWW_by_State.shtml
 - ii. For Senators, go to:
http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm

- iii. From these main pages, select a particular legislator and you will be taken to their personal web page. Their contact information for both the D.C. and local offices will be on their home page.
 - b. When you call, ask for the staff member who schedules the legislator's appointments. Explain who you are, what you represent, why you want to meet, and your availability.
 - c. If you can not arrange a meeting, check their web page for calendars and events where the representative or senator is scheduled to appear in public (e.g., community forums, speaking engagements, groundbreaking or ribbon-cutting ceremonies, etc.). Attend the event, make every effort to politely meet the legislator, shake hands, introduce yourself, and ask for specific support.
3. Once a meeting is arranged, bring the following documents to leave with the legislator or their Staff.
 - a. HR 2906, Comprehensive Problem Gambling Act.
 - b. Request for support letter.
 - c. Your business card.
4. After your meeting send a thank you letter to the Legislator again requesting or confirming their support.
5. Send Keith Whyte an email with a very short summary of your meeting.

Additional Information

The current Congressional calendar shows both the House and Senate will recess for the traditional August break on July 31 and return to deliberations on September 14. During this time, most federal legislators will return to their districts to campaign and make public appearances. This gives you the opportunity to meet with them and ask for their support without going to Washington. Often, their schedules are more relaxed and access is easier.

There are three key steps to make your contact with your legislators more productive:

1. **KNOW WHAT YOU ARE ASKING FOR!** You do need to do a little homework, and the NCPG staff has prepared some easy-to-read documents to help (see attachments). It helps to actually read the bill language, too. This necessary research will take less than 15 minutes.
2. **BE PREPARED TO ANSWER QUESTIONS.** Information you should have readily available include the following: your state's estimated prevalence rate, the amount of gambling in the state, and the economic impact of problem gambling. You can obtain this basic information on your state on the advocacy page of the NCPG web site. You may need to counter the current belief that "it's a state issue". Be ready to explain why it is a federal responsibility (the amount of tax money the federal government collects from gambling winnings OR a federalism policy to help spur state and local action), how serious the problem is, what kind of services are available now, and so on. Be direct and as complete as you can

with your answers. Additional information on why it is important for federal action is in the NCPG background and support materials.

3. **BE DIRECT IN YOUR REQUEST!** After introductions and pleasantries, please say something like, "I hope you will seriously consider sponsoring and voting for HR 2906, the Comprehensive Problem Gambling Act of 2009. It is a necessary step in bringing help to some 6 million Americans who suffer from gambling addiction." Also, you can ask what staff member, both in district and in Washington, should be contacted with additional information and requests regarding this issue.

That's it! It's not hard. It does take some time, but consider the time spent a small investment in the future of services to addicted gamblers. They need it, and it is why we are in this work.

Best wishes for success.