

The Comprehensive Problem Gambling Act (CPG): **H.R. 2906/S. 3418**

The Comprehensive Problem Gambling Act (CPG), the first-ever bill to fight gambling addiction, was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives in June 2009 as **H.R. 2906** by Representatives Moran (D-VA), Wolf (R-VA), Berman (D-CA) and Terry (R-NE), and as of June 2010 has 62 sponsors.

The companion bill was introduced in the U.S. Senate in May 2010 as **S. 3418** by Senators Merkley (D-OR), Johanns (R-NE), Casey (D-PA) and Brown (D-OH).

As you know, problem gambling is national public health issue because of the:

- Presence of gambling—48 states and 2/3 of Federally-recognized tribes have legalized gambling;
- Participation in gambling—70% of adults gambled at least once in the past year, 15% at least once in the past week;
- Proceeds from gambling—\$95 billion in gaming revenues last year to states and companies;
- Profits to the U.S. Treasury from the Federal withholding tax on individual jackpots—approximately \$6 billion per year;
- Prevalence of gambling addiction—1% of adults meet criteria for pathological gambling in a given year, another 2% meet criteria for problem gambling, adding up to 6-9 million adults and 500,000 adolescents; and
- Perception of gambling addiction as an serious issue by a large majority of the public;
- Problems—the social cost of problem gambling, including addiction, bankruptcy and crime, was almost \$7 billion last year.

However, there are no Federal agencies with a formal responsibility for addressing the devastating consequences of this disorder, ranging from bankruptcy, job loss, incarceration, divorce, depression and despair to a high rate of suicidal behavior. Problem gamblers also have high rates of co-occurring substance abuse and mental health disorders. Therefore, CPG authorizes SAMHSA, as the lead Federal agency on substance abuse and mental health services, to address problem gambling and appropriates a total of \$71 million in competitive Federal grants to support state-based programs that:

- prevent underage and problem gambling;
- provide treatment for those with gambling addiction, and
- research the causes, courses and consequences of problem gambling.

Research shows every **\$1 spent on problem gambling services saves \$2 in social costs**. Programs to prevent gambling problems from starting are obviously the most ethical and effective means to reduce the financial cost and emotional trauma to individuals, families and communities and improve quality of life, family relationships, financial and mental health, housing and other key indicators of health and welfare.

Over 5 years the bill would provide a total of:

- \$50 million in grants for problem gambling prevention and treatment;
- \$20 million in grants for problem gambling research;
- \$1 million for a national public awareness campaign.

CPG does not expand, restrict or tax state gambling operations. CPG is a modest first step and balanced approach that provides Federal funds to meet gaps in state service delivery systems while preserving the state and tribal responsibility and authority over gambling policy and regulation.

In addition to providing a safety net to the millions of problem gamblers and their families, CPG lays the foundation for the creation of public/private partnerships that will enable states to reduce the social costs of this disorder. CPG funding will be directed to local and state organizations who will not only have opportunities to bid on research and treatment grants, but also will have additional resources and impetus to work with their state legislatures to develop proactive policies and programs to mitigate problem gambling issues.

Over 80 national, state and local health organizations—including the American Psychological Association, American School Counselors Association and the American Society of Addiction Medicine—support the bill.

The National Council on Problem Gambling is the national advocate for programs and services to assist problem gamblers and their families. NCPG was founded in 1972 and is a non-partisan, non-profit foundation that is neutral on gambling. NCPG and its 35 state affiliate chapters work together to provide the majority of services for problem gamblers and their families.

WE NEED YOUR HELP TO PASS THIS HISTORIC LEGISLATION!!!!

**Contact Congress—ask your Representatives to support
H.R. 2906 and your Senators to support S. 3418. For
legislative tools, tips and templates, goto:**

www.ncpgambling.org/advocacy