

Background Information on H.R. 2906, the Comprehensive Problem Gambling Act of 2009 (CPG)

Problem gambling is a growing public health concern, characterized by increasing preoccupation with and loss of control over gambling, restlessness or irritability when attempting to stop gambling, and/or continued gambling despite serious negative consequences. In particular:

- Over 70% of adults have gambled at least once in the past year, 15% at least once in the past week.
- Legal gambling revenue in the U.S. (the amount that gamblers lost) grew to approximately \$100 billion last year, and this figure does not include most sports betting, poker or internet gambling.
- The economic recession and likelihood of state expansion of gambling in response to revenue shortfalls may disproportionately impact problem gamblers.
- Nationwide, 6 to 9 million people (3-4% of adults) met criteria for a gambling problem.
- The estimated social cost to families and communities from gambling-related bankruptcy, divorce, crime and job loss was almost \$7 billion last year.
- There are no Federal agencies with a formal responsibility for addressing these issues.
- Problem gamblers also have high rates of co-occurring substance abuse and mental health disorders, including smoking, alcohol use and abuse, drug use and abuse, depression and suicidal behavior.
- SAMHSA is the lead Federal agency that provides prevention and treatment services.

H.R. 2906 represents a solution to the need for a specific, dedicated Federal response to the issue of problem gambling. It provides SAMHSA with specific authority as the lead agency on problem and pathological gambling issues to coordinate Federal action on this issue. Without specific authorization this issue will continue to generate significant social costs. With authorization, Federal agencies will be empowered to address this public health issue through the identification of existing infrastructure and programs that can mitigate the impact of problem gambling throughout the United States.

CPG allocates a portion of gambling revenue to support programs at the state level to help problem gamblers and their families. The entire cost of the bill is less than 1/4 of 1% of the estimated \$5.3 billion in 2006 Federal tax revenue from gambling winnings.

The bill provides \$14.2 million in grants per year to non-profits and state agencies for prevention, research and treatment of problem gambling.

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.

H.R. 2906 does not expand, restrict or tax state gambling operations.

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. The 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.

H.R. 2906 is supported by over a number of national, state and local organizations. It is a balanced approach by providing Federal funds to meet gaps in state service delivery systems while preserving the state's responsibility and authority over gambling policy and regulation.

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 neither for nor against legalized gambling. NCPG and its 35 state affiliate chapters work together to provide the majority of services for problem gamblers and their families.

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