

July xx, 2009

Honorable xxx
xxx Senate Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator xxx:

I am writing to respectfully request that you introduce a companion bill to H.R. 2906, the Comprehensive Problem Gambling Act of 2009. The legislation amends the Public Health Service Act to designate SAMHSA as the lead Federal agency on problem gambling issues and provides grants to state health agencies, tribes, universities and non-profits for the prevention, treatment and research of problem gambling. This specific authorization is important as Federal health agencies have been resistant to requests to address gambling problems. And although problem gambling is a critical national public health issue there is not a single dollar in the Federal health budget dedicated to this issue. CPG is designed to fill this gap by providing \$14.2 million per year over the next five years—the total appropriation of \$71 million is less than ¼ of 1% of the estimated \$5.3 billion in FY 06 Federal revenue from taxes on gambling winnings. This new appropriation ensures that current funding levels for substance abuse and mental health are unaffected.

As you know, the majority of Americans gamble, most without harm to themselves, their families or their communities; however approximately 3-4% of adults in America meet criteria for a gambling problem. Gambling addictions have particularly adverse impacts on youth, seniors and other vulnerable groups. These bills will boost existing efforts and alleviate pressure on state agencies and local non-profits—such as the xxx Council on Problem Gambling—who daily deal with the devastating consequences of this disorder. This legislation will provide the first-ever Federal support for programs at the state level that currently strain to handle the devastating consequences of this addiction--from bankruptcy, job loss, incarceration, divorce, depression and despair to a high rate of suicidal behavior.

H.R. 2906 focuses on integrating problem gambling services into the Federal health agencies and supporting existing state-based programs to help problem gamblers and their families. These bills do not expand, restrict or tax gambling. We can arrange for staff of the National Council on Problem Gambling to meet at your convenience in your Washington office, or if it is preferable, for staff of the xxx Council to meet at your state office. Your sponsorship of this common-sense legislation in the Senate will have a significant positive impact in your state and across the country. Thank you.

Sincerely,

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Cc: Keith Whyte, Executive Director, National Council on Problem Gambling