

H.R. 2906, the Comprehensive Problem Gambling Act of 2009

Press Conference/Staff Briefing

Thursday, September 17, 2009

441 Cannon House Office Building

The Vital Role of Non-Profits in Problem Gambling Prevention, Education and Treatment

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I would first like to thank our lead sponsors, the Honorable Jim Moran and the Honorable Frank Wolf, of H.R. 2906 for initiating this important legislative effort. We thank all the other co-sponsors, including my representative the Honorable Jim McDermott, and all members and staff who support this ground breaking effort.

The National Council on Problem Gambling is the national advocate for all issues related to problem and pathological gambling in this country. The NCPG is the hub of the wheel and the **thirty-five state affiliates** translate the vision and goals of the NCPG into local action strategies. All affiliates are 501 (c) 3 non profit organizations and represent the majority of the board of directors of the NCPG.

Affiliates vary in size and scope of operation but are vital cogs in the service delivery system for problem gamblers. All support **toll-free helplines** that provide the vital portal to problem gamblers and their families and **provide information and referral** for assessment and treatment. Most affiliates have a long and solid history of providing **training for health and mental health practitioners**, both in the public and private sectors. A number provide state based **certification programs for problem gambling counselors** to supplement the International Gambling Counselor Certification Board. Several affiliates offer employee training and responsible gaming certification for the gaming industry and focus on policy development (self-exclusion, employee problem gambling and underage gambling enforcement), supervisory training and responsible marketing.

Affiliates of the NCPG offer hope and help to problem gamblers and their families who are in need of guidance to Gamblers Anonymous meetings, seek referral for treatment and information about this hidden addiction. They provide access to screening instruments for both adolescents and adults with emphasis on assistance for underserved groups like seniors and non-mainstream population groups. All affiliates provide a variety of informational resources like public services announcements, speaker forums, curriculum development in schools and universities. Affiliates are central to the success of National Problem Gambling Awareness Week and continuing prevention and awareness efforts throughout the year.

As an example of state-based activities the Evergreen (Washington State) Council on Problem Gambling has been active in creating a broad-based collaboration with the recovering community, the gaming industry, state, local and tribal governments and health agencies and private health care providers. We held a conference last spring in collaboration with the Oregon Council that provided the 300 attendees with a rich program and a focus on the future. We are currently conducting a professional training program in Leavenworth, WA for mental health and addictions professionals and are co-sponsoring the 2009 Tribal Problem Gambling Awareness Conference Four Directions: Honoring Our Past - Protecting Our Future with the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe. We recently co-sponsored a tribal youth summer music academy where youth created prevention and awareness messages to share with their peers. State Representative John McCoy has agreed to sponsor legislation for a pilot therapeutic justice program. We also partner with the Addictive Behaviors Research Center at the University of Washington on issues related to college student gambling.

Enactment of H.R. 2906 would not only give problem gambling a place to reside within the Federal government but also provide funding for state-based programs to enhance the work done by our growing base of NCPG affiliates.

Thank you again for your active interest and involvement in the important public policy and public health issues regarding problem gambling.

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