



## Summary of Legislative Briefing & Advocacy Visits

# Impact of Gambling Addiction on Military Personnel & Veterans

During Problem Gambling Awareness Month the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) organized a Problem Gambling Advocacy Day with a legislative briefing and advocacy visits on Capitol Hill to raise awareness of the impact of gambling addiction on military personnel and veterans.

On March 25 members of the NCPG Board of Directors and staff met with Congressional members and their staff. The following day, Board members attended the briefing and held additional meetings. In advance of day every Senate and most House offices were contacted by NCPG staff and state affiliate chapters.

Direct meetings with Congressional members were held with Rep. Seth Moulton (D-MA) and Rep. Chris Collins (R-NY) by NCPG Board Members Marlene Warner and Judge Mark Farrell respectively. Judge Farrell also met with the Military Legislative Assistant for Sen. John McCain (R-AZ). Board member Don Feeney met with Sgt. Maj. Hawkins, Defense Fellow for Rep. Tim Walz (D-MN). NCPG Executive Director Keith Whyte attended a meeting with staff for Sen. Tom Udall, arranged by Kandace Blanchard of the New Mexico Council on Problem Gambling. He also accompanied Ms. Warner to the meeting with Rep. Moulton and with Ian Wilhite, Legislative Correspondent for Rep. Joseph Kennedy III (D-MA).

On March 26, Mr. Whyte met with Maj. Charlie Toth, Defense Fellow for Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA) along with NCPG Board members Maureen Greeley and Dr. Ty Lostutter. After the briefing, Board member Jerry Bauerkemper and Whyte met with Commander Eddie Pilcher, Defense Fellow for Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-AL).



Whyte & Lostutter @ Office of Sen. Murray

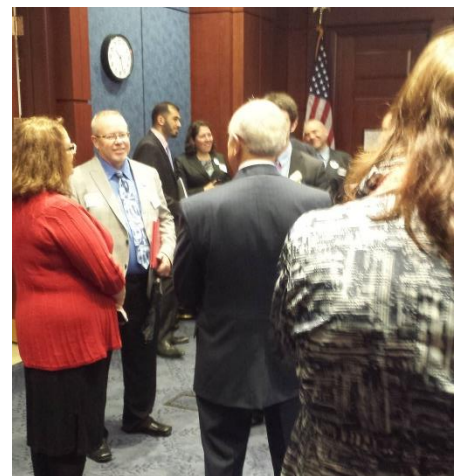
On March 26, NCPG held a Legislative Briefing in the Senate Visitors Center. Over 25 individuals attended the meeting, hosted by Senator Elizabeth Warren and Representative Seth Moulton at the request of NCPG's affiliate chapter, the Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling. Executive Director Marlene Warner thanked the hosts, welcomed the attendees, introduced the panelists and provided information on a soon-to-be-released study in Massachusetts that found high rates of gambling problems among veterans in the state. An excerpt of the award-



He's Not The Same: NY Council/Outreach Arts

winning video *He's Not the Same* was shown (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y9GtJr9rYao>). The story centers on a young veteran who gambles to cope with the transition into civilian life. By the time we meet him, he's deeply in debt, living with his Mom and college-age sister - and has recently split with his fiancée. His family does all they can but continually fail to reach him. Ultimately, he seeks help after hearing a family friend's tragic story about her veteran son's

gambling addiction. Judge Mark Farrell, USAF (Ret) discussed how his experiences as a JAG lawyer and justice influenced his decision to start a therapeutic justice gambling court and veterans' court and described their remarkable success. Army veteran David Yeager discussed the debilitating gambling addiction he developed while stationed in Korea and the lack of resources that led to the loss of his career, family and home; and how he eventually found a treatment program through the VA and is now in long-term recovery. He told his story in order to help others understand the need for dedicated problem gambling services for active-duty personnel. After the briefing Yeager also visited his Congressman, Rep. Joseph Pitts (R-PA) and met with Legislative Assistant Josh Althouse.



Briefing attendees in Senate Visitors Center

These advocacy efforts on Capitol Hill were very successful and we look forward to working with supporters in the House and Senate to introduce legislation that directs the Department of Defense to develop comprehensive programs for active-duty military personnel as well as veterans to prevent and treat the threats to health and safety presented by gambling addiction.

NCPG is the national advocate for programs and services to assist problem gamblers and their families. For more information on NCPG legislative priorities, including a fact sheet on Gambling in the Military, goto [www.ncpgambling.org/advocacy](http://www.ncpgambling.org/advocacy)