



NEWS

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Chicago Crime Commission calls last minute gambling legislation cynical and callous

For Immediate Release

Chicago, IL –Friday, May 7, 2010 - Legislative leaders and the powerful gambling lobby appear poised to pass legislation that will expand gambling in Illinois without any review hearings or other due diligence. “The tactics being used are the same ones the gambling lobby has been practicing since the days of Al Capone to get unsavory legislation enacted into law. Their efforts are cynical and callous,” according to Art Bilek, executive director of the Chicago Crime Commission.

“The gambling lobby is working through compliant legislators to speed this bill through the legislative process by inserted language into an existing bill concerning nursing homes. This new legislation profoundly expand gambling in Illinois,” Bilek said.

“Introducing this bill hastily and under a veil of secrecy is not in the best interest of the general public. If passed, this legislation will have some serious safety and quality of life consequences,” he added.

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The bill will allow a variety of unannounced and undebated ways to gamble in Illinois and includes the following:

- Allows so-called penny video poker machines in which each player puts in a number of pennies or the equivalent on a debit card. The argument is that some players do not have quarters or dollars to bet so the wagering limit should be reduced to a penny
- Provides for around-the-clock gambling at truck stops
- Amends the existing video poker regulation by allowing video poker machines near schools. This means that the machines can be placed near day-care centers, pre-schools, youth centers, community colleges and universities
- Allows the so-called amusement only video poker machines now operating throughout the state to continue to operate unlicensed until the new legal video poker gaming act is implemented

The Chicago Crime Commission flatly opposes this legislation on numerous grounds, most particularly the last minute introduction of the legislation. “None of the items contained in this bill have suddenly appeared. All of them were well known to the gambling lobbyists for months,” Bilek said. “Clearly, the intent of introducing this bill in the closing hours of the legislative session was to ram it through the Illinois Legislature regardless of the best interests of the citizens of Illinois,” he concluded.