



## NEWS

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### **Illinois Gaming Board warned that video gambling machines will create uncontrollable situation**

*Group calls on Springfield to reverse video gambling law*

#### **For Immediate Release**

Chicago, IL – Tuesday, August 25, 2009 – Elected leaders, community activists and the Chicago Crime Commission – joining forces as the Coalition Against Neighborhood Gambling--cautioned members of the Illinois Gaming Board that the long-term cost to society would far outweigh any short-term revenue gains if video gambling machines were installed in Illinois. At Tuesday's meeting of the Illinois Gaming Board, they also warned that plans to place 45 thousand video gambling machines throughout the state would create a virtually uncontrollable situation and asked that Springfield reverse the state's video gambling law.

"Today we are coming to the Illinois Gaming Board for the public hearing on video gambling that never happened in Springfield," said Cook County Board Commissioner Bridget Gainer from Chicago. "It is imperative that those charged with regulating video gambling in Illinois thoroughly understand that video poker has left a wake of crime and bankruptcy in every state that has legalized it," she added.

"While there is great need for a capital bill in Illinois to rebuild our roads, bridges, schools and transit system, I assure you that video gambling is not a part of the solution," Gainer said. Gainer, who plans on introducing an ordinance to ban video gambling in Cook County on September 1, 2009, said any short-term revenue gains would be far exceeded by the long-term costs to society.

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In fact, Gainer questions the revenue projections of video gambling in Illinois. “I believe the projected revenue increase of \$300 million is an exaggeration bordering on fantasy. There is a finite amount of money that people are willing to spend on gambling, and while video gambling may attract many of those dollars, it will be at the expense of the tax revenue collected from the lottery, casinos or racetracks, and the cost of taxpayer dollars for the increased law enforcement costs communities will experience,” she said. “Essentially, we will be robbing Peter to pay Paul.”

Earlier this month, in response to the passage of the video gambling law, the DuPage County Board voted unanimously to ban video poker in unincorporated areas of DuPage County after County Board Member Brien Sheahan introduced the prohibition with the backing of Chairman Bob Schillerstrom.

“This legislation passed by the Illinois General Assembly represents an unprecedented expansion of gambling, and we wanted to send a clear message that it is not right for DuPage County. I also believe video gambling is wrong for every other community in Illinois,” commented Sheahan.

Sheahan said he hopes the opposition catches on and pushes legislators to find other revenue options. “I am hopeful the Illinois legislature and the Governor will see their error and move quickly to introduce legislation to reverse the video gambling law. This is an extremely bad revenue source, at a cost that is unacceptably high,” he said. “I guarantee it will be a lot more trouble than it’s worth.” Sheahan concluded.

“The decentralized nature of video gambling may soon turn Illinois into the ‘Wild West’ of gambling,” said John Pastuovic, Director of Public Affairs for the Chicago Crime Commission. “I would encourage elected officials and regulators throughout the state to seriously consider the ramifications of their actions and move quickly to ban video gambling machines before they are ever installed,” he stated.

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While a law enforcement needs analysis is currently non-existent, the Chicago Crime Commission estimates that Illinois will soon have to hire hundreds of new police and regulatory personnel to begin addressing the law enforcement requirement of this gambling expansion.

Pastuovic also expressed concern that it would be difficult if not impossible to curb the influence of organized crime in this new, tough to regulate enterprise. “It is a fact that organized crime is known to gravitate towards gambling and other ancillary businesses,” he continued.

“Video gambling has been called the crack cocaine of gaming for good reason. With the proliferation of video gambling, communities can expect to experience an increase in crime and a rise in other social ills connected with this type of gambling expansion,” he added.

“I have significant concern that entire families will be left penniless because Mom or Dad will be feeding their entire paycheck into the video poker machines,” Pastuovic concluded.

Others coming out to show their support at the Illinois Gaming Board meeting included Anita Bedell, Executive Director, Illinois Church Action on Alcohol & Addiction Problems; Andy Shaw, Executive Director, Better Government Association; Aaron Lawlor, Dupage County Commissioner; Mayor Dwight Welch, Country Club Hills; Diane Gutenkauf, Elmhurst City Council; and Diane Pezza, Elmhurst City Council.

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