

**SENATE COMMUNITY ECONOMIC AND RECREATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE 02/03/09**

Good afternoon members of the Committee. My name is Nanette Horner and I am the Director of the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board's Office of Compulsive and Problem Gambling (OCPG). I am presenting to you today information on the undertakings and accomplishments of the OCPG.

The OCPG is charged with (1) ensuring that each slot machine licensee in the Commonwealth establishes and complies with a compulsive and problem gambling plan which includes the plan's goals, training of employees, procedures for the dissemination of materials, and outreach programs; (2) heightening public awareness of the dangers of compulsive, problem, intoxicated and underage gambling; (3) developing prevention programs and harm reduction tools for gamblers; (4) establishing education programs for residents of all ages; and (5) directing problem gamblers and their families to compulsive gamblers assistance organizations' toll-free help lines for crisis counseling, referral services and treatment.

OFFICE OF COMPULSIVE AND PROBLEM GAMBLING

In September 2006, the Board created the OCPG. The OCPG is independent from all other PGCB offices and bureaus and I report

directly to the Executive Director. My independence is important because I act as a liaison between the Board and (1) the licensees regarding compulsive and problem gambling plans, (2) the Department of Health, specifically Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Programs ("BDAP"), regarding their compulsive and problem gambling program guidelines, (3) the public and (4) the Council on Compulsive Gambling of Pennsylvania regarding compulsive and problem gambling awareness and the state's self-exclusion program.

The regulation of legalized gaming has expanded over the years. The first layer of regulatory oversight began with law enforcement to ensure suitability of the operators. The next layer included accounting and auditing to ensure financial integrity. The third layer added technology to the mix as casinos became automated and slot machines are no longer strictly mechanical devices. We are now entering the fourth layer which involves social responsibility and the realization that not every individual can gamble in a responsible manner.

In creating the OCPG, PGCB has demonstrated its commitment to understanding and alleviating the devastating effects of pathological gambling by making Pennsylvania only the second gaming jurisdiction to establish an Office and Director in its gaming regulatory body.

COMPULSIVE AND PROBLEM GAMBLING PLANS

The Board reviews and approves the Compulsive and Problem Gambling Plans submitted by slot machine license applicants. Approval of the plan is not a condition of licensure, but it is required prior to the conduct of gaming. As the Director of OCPG, my responsibility includes the review and approval of each licensed slot facility's compulsive gambling plans, training procedures, internal controls and signage prior to their opening. Last week we began the dissemination of the prototype for uniform signage for every facility to utilize that includes statements regarding the prohibition of underage gambling and gambling by individuals on the self-exclusion list, the helpline number selected by the facility and the PGCB official seal.

COMMONWEALTH BUREAUS AND COMMISSIONS

Representatives of the BDAP, the PA Lottery, Racing Commission and the PGCB meet monthly in order to ensure a uniform approach to the issue of problem gambling. Topics of discussion have included the toll-free helpline and toll free information line; interlinking our respective websites and problem gambling information; our joint support of the National Problem Gambling Awareness Week; and exploration of self-exclusion programs for all types of legalized gaming in the Commonwealth.

NATIONAL PROBLEM GAMBLING AWARENESS WEEK

National Problem Gambling Awareness Week (NPGAW) is a grassroots approach to educate the public and health care professionals about problem gambling and to raise awareness that hope and help are available. As you know, NPGAW is March 1-7, 2009. This is the third year that the Board has participated in NPGAW. We have posted 17 informational documents on our website that address specific groups such as Older Adults, Teens, Problem Gambling in the Workplace, etc.; a hyperlink to the audio documentary entitled, "Luck's No Lady"; 4 video Frequently Asked Questions about problem gambling and self-exclusion; and a link to "Your First Step to Change" which is a self-help guide. We will be setting up booths in Strawberry Square, the Mini-Rotunda in the Capitol and at Washington Crown Mall in Washington Township in order to provide information and assistance. We will also provide to Commonwealth employees the link to this information via an Office of Administration email message. The OCPG also facilitated a Joint Statement from the PA Secretaries of Health, Revenue and Agriculture, and resolutions in the Senate and the House of Representatives, and a Governor's proclamation to recognize PGAW.

Chairs Earll and Fontana, I want to commend your initiative in not only recognizing NPGAW for the week of March 1st through 7th but for the month of March. It is most appropriate at this time between the Super

Bowl (for which an estimated \$8 billion was wagered legally and illegally) and March Madness (during which office pools are worth an estimated \$2.5 billion) for all of us to attempt to raise awareness of the extreme difficulty that those who are making every effort to recover from a gambling problem will face when trying to steer clear of temptation, and to be cognizant of the assistance needed by spouses, children, relatives and friends of compulsive gamblers. Again, I as well as the Board commend you because too often problem gambling and its treatment programs do not receive the recognition or support they deserve.

SELF EXCLUSION

The Board created the Commonwealth's Self-Exclusion program in October 2006. It is a voluntary program to assist problem gamblers to take control of their gambling behavior and to be excluded from participating in legalized gaming activities under the jurisdiction of the Board and from receiving any gaming privileges that may be a temptation for problem gamblers such as check cashing privileges, player club membership, complimentary goods and services, targeted mailings and promotional materials related to gaming activities.

The Self-Exclusion program involves a 20-30 minute intake interview, with a trained Board employee, which creates an opportunity to

discuss prevention, education and treatment options, as well as data collection to allow for continued expansion and improvement of compulsive and problem gambling programs. Board employees at all licensed facilities and Board offices are trained in the intake procedures. We currently have 543 individuals who have requested to be placed on the self-exclusion list and 21 individuals who have requested to be, and have been, removed from the list (three of whom returned to be placed back on the list).

PREVENTION, EDUCATION, TREATMENT AND RESEARCH

Research has shown that roughly 1-3% of Americans will develop a gambling problem sometime in life. Increased accessibility to gaming venues could initially show higher numbers of problem gamblers in the vicinity of casinos. However, while casinos, racetracks and lottery provide the opportunity for the person to gamble, the opportunity does not, in and of itself, create the problem any more than a liquor store creates an alcoholic.

There is growing research showing that there are some peculiarities in the brains of pathological gamblers—but whether that is the cause or the result is still an open question and subject to more research, but it could mean that some people have a predisposition for gambling. Other research shows that while only around 10% of those with

gambling problems will seek treatment for this impulse control disorder, evidence of harm reduction and natural recovery has been shown.

Calendar Year 2008 Accomplishments

During 2008, the OCPG was asked to make presentations on several different aspects of problem gambling to groups that included: The University of Pittsburgh, Institute of Politics; Northampton County Gambling Impact Committee; National Council of Legislators from Gaming States; Association of Problem Gambling Service Administrators; 22nd National Conference on Problem Gambling; House Gaming Oversight Committee; Council on Compulsive Gambling of Pennsylvania Annual Statewide Conference; and Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling's Annual Statewide Conference.

In the past year, the International Masters of Gaming Law named me to the Responsible Gaming Committee and I was subsequently elected to the association's Board of Directors.

The OCPG's Program Coordinator, Elizabeth Lanza, was busy in 2008 maintaining the Board's Self-Exclusion Program, communicating with the general public about self-exclusion and problem gambling, meeting with other state agencies, attending state and national conferences on

problem gambling and making presentations. Liz sent informational packets regarding compulsive gambling to state and county probation and parole office and to state prisons to help the populations of prisoners who have committed crimes related to gambling problems and for those prisoners who exhibit problem gambling behavior. Liz also sent information to racetrack Chaplains who provide many services to track employees including counseling services for problem gambling.

In October, the PGCB was awarded the first annual Award for Outstanding Contribution by a Government Agency in the field of Problem Gambling from the Council on Compulsive Gambling of Pennsylvania. The award lauds the entire PGCB for "its outstanding pioneering efforts in supporting education, awareness and responsible gaming programs."

The autumn 2008 edition of Casino Lawyer Magazine included an article written by me titled, "Corporate Social Responsibility: The Fourth Wave of Regulation?" As I stated earlier, the fourth wave of regulation utilizes the knowledge possessed by experts in social science, public health and the environment.

Calendar Year 2009

Throughout this year the OCPG would like to offer our time, materials and programs to assist you in reaching out to your constituents to raise awareness of problem gambling and to assist problem gamblers and their families in obtaining answers and treatment.

In closing, I want to assure you that the OPCG has begun and will continue to explore best practices for the prevention, education, treatment and research of gambling problems.