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Don't be fooled: Gambling isn't conservative

In 2012, Kentucky legislators—led by Democratic Governor Beshear—will be encouraged to invite expanded gambling into our state. Many conservative legislators are tempted to give in on this issue. Some are even strongly for it. The temptation for some legislators who claim the conservative label is to view expanded gaming as a libertarian or individual matter of conscience.

Legislators should know better. Any “conservative” who wishes to expand government bureaucracy, hurt free enterprise, wound families, acquiesce to liberals, and pollute local cultures should have their conservative credentials not only questioned, but also withheld.

Don't be fooled: Gambling isn't conservative. Ask yourself: Is it “conservative” to support the following?

- **Redistribution of wealth.** Gambling encourages the taking of money from one class of people (typically those of the lower middle class) and gives it to another class (casino moguls).
- **Ill-gotten gain.** Predatory capitalism—like gambling—allows profit to be gained, not through hard work, but luck.
- **Increased spending.** Studies suggest that any gained revenue is off-set by social costs that follow gambling. Whether hiring more police officers in towns with casinos or paying for an individual to go on state-funded food programs because of lost personal income, the social costs of allowing gambling outweigh any long-term positive gains.
- **Personal recklessness.** Gambling discourages thrift and incentivizes laziness.
- **Anti-business.** Gambling diverts money away from local business. What would have been spent on TVs and refrigerators is gambled away to out-of-state casino industries. Casinos reduce the cash available in the economy for floating new businesses or expanding old ones that create new jobs. Casinos just move jobs from one location to another, but do not result in a net gain in jobs.
- **Pollutes culture.** What began in Las Vegas doesn't stay in Las Vegas. Where gambling takes root, culture always declines. Pornographers flock like vultures to wherever casinos locate. Sex-related crimes increase. It is no coincidence that Las Vegas has 13 abortion clinics for an area with a population of 550,000 while Kentucky only has two clinics for 4.3 million people.
- **Statism.** Casino gambling results in an increase in government bureaucracy. Gambling necessitates expensive regulation. Regulatory commissions alone could add 100-200 to the government payroll.
- **Imprudent.** Gambling revenue provides an unstable revenue stream. Studies show that programs funded by gambling revenue eventually outpace gambling revenue and therefore enlarge debt obligations.
- **The vulnerable will be destroyed.** The first rule of governing is: Do no harm. While not everyone will be harmed, some people will be utterly destroyed—their families, their finances, even their own lives. Fraud. Theft. Child abuse. Divorce. Neglect. Suicide. Is gambling really worth it?

Remember, the losers build the gambling industry—not those who win. Conservatism is a winning philosophy. Don't join the losers. Protect our families. Protect our businesses. Vote against expanded gambling.