

Hawaii Family Forum

Monthly MEMOs

April 6, 2001

Mainland Gambling Forces Pressing Hawaii Legislators

Hawaii is not out of the woods on the gambling issue this legislative session. With only a few weeks to go in the 2001 legislature, most observers continue repeating the mantra 'gambling is dead.'

An April 5th hearing in the Senate, however, demonstrated otherwise. At issue during the 4 ½ hour hearing were two resolutions, Senate Resolution (SR) 91 and Senate Concurrent Resolution (SCR) 123. Both resolutions recommend some form of a local study of the gambling issue. SR91 recommends a study of only the 'economic' impact with no mention of the 'social' costs. SCR123 recommends studying both the economic and social implications of legalized gambling in Hawaii.

Hawaii Family Forum (HFF), in keeping with the position of the Hawaii Coalition Against Legalized Gambling, testified against SR91 but in support of SCR123 IF it were amended as follows:

Credible Study - Study must be credible from a methodological standpoint, conducted by a fair and balanced representation of interests and not funded by the gambling industry.

Balanced Study - Study must include examination of both social and economic costs.

Family Represented - Study group must include a member representing the interests of Hawaii's families.

Native Gambling Explored - Study must include an examination of the applicability of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA), the federal law allowing widespread gambling on certain Native American lands if the state allows gambling in any form. With the pending proposal to grant Native American-like sovereignty to Native Hawaiians, local lawmakers must have a clear understanding of the implications of IGRA.

Outside 'Big-Guns' On Hand

The non-Hawaii pro-gambling forces were plentiful at the April 5 Senate hearing. But instead of directing their testimony to the resolutions at issue, they presented charts and graphs showing the great economic benefits gambling would allegedly provide. Representatives were present from the American Gaming Association, the International Gaming Institute, Sun International Hotels Ltd., and 'gambling consultants' from Detroit, MI. .

'Phony' Local Support

Also present were dozens of elderly people wearing white t-shirts 'supporting gaming for better education.' These nice folks were bused to the capitol and given free shirts and lunches. It became clear during conversations with them that they believed they were present to support the striking teachers, NOT to support gambling. Several Senators indicated their displeasure with these phony tactics designed to artificially create a local groundswell of support for casinos – a groundswell that clearly does not exist.

Education Strike Renews Fervor for 'Gambling as The Solution'

With Hawaii's educators walking the picket line, the state's scramble to find enough money for the budget is hitting Hawaii residents much closer to home. Pro-gambling forces have been touting 'limited casino gambling' as the panacea for Hawaii's educational funding woes. This is not a new strategy, it happens all across the mainland. As you hear more and more of the gambling proponent's empty promises, please keep two things in mind:

- 1- There will be no such thing as 'limited casino gambling.' Once the industry has its foot in the door, Hawaii will be faced with the prospect of widespread gambling and all its negative attendant consequences.
- 2- 'Gambling money for Education' is nothing more than a slogan. If gambling were legalized and the tax proceeds were dedicated to education, the existing education money would quickly be diverted elsewhere, leaving education funding NO BETTER OFF! This has been the experience over and over again on the mainland. Don't be fooled!

Please take the time to become educated on the gambling issue. Visit Focus on the Family's website for fabulous information on all aspects of the gambling issue – www.family.org/cforum/gambling. Whether your concern is addiction, family breakdown, small business impact, adolescents, corruption or any number of other aspects of commercial gambling, you will find a wealth of information from Focus on the Family.

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