

The Watertown Daily Times

Online gambling: a casino in every home

Opinion

By Charlotte Wellins

TUESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2012

The editors of the Times have it right. The legislators in our state who would be supporters of online gambling and expanding lottery sales options need to do their homework before the “horse is out of the barn,” so to speak.

According to many public opinion polls, two out of three Americans oppose legalizing online gambling. Should they? I think it would be wise to consider the following in arriving at an answer: Online gambling is like putting a casino in every home that has a computer. Without getting out of your pajamas and robes, you can sit for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You might ask, “Who would do that?” The answer is the addicted, pathological gambler would do that — and often does. Have no doubt about it, the research tells us that proximity of a casino increases the number of problem gamblers within a 50-mile radius by a great deal.

By putting a casino in the home, we make it easier for gamblers to gamble without doing anything but turning on his or her computer. The game is speeded up, the frequency of play is increased because providers allow a player to play more than one game at a time, the intensity of the “high” is increased and an enormous amount of money is lost. (You don’t think the providers are going to lose in the long run, do you?) Then, of course, we have the destruction of families that goes along with this.

There is yet another item to consider: the issue of underage gamblers. No one on the other side of the computer is monitoring the age of online gamblers. I heard of a case last year where a 10-year-old from the Buffalo area maxed out his father’s \$25,000 credit card in a very short period of time. No one monitors whose credit card a gambler is using.

The author of the Times editorial is gentle in saying that “... the state doesn’t have to encourage or profit from socially disruptive behavior.” I think it far more accurate to say that the state does not have the right to prey upon its constituents whom legislators are sworn to protect. The state should not expand the already predatory practices that it fosters upon citizens of the state. The state should stop predatory gambling practices.

Charlotte Nindl-Wellins

Wellesley Island

The writer is secretary of Coalition Against Gambling in New York and a Stop Predatory Gambling board member.