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Care to Revise Your Statement?

By Isaiah Thompson

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Last week, the Pennsylvania House Gaming Oversight Committee passed, just barely, a bill to the House floor that would require casinos to mail **monthly "expense" (or "loss") statements** to all players who use "rewards" cards. The bill was sponsored by Rep. Paul Clymer (R-Bucks), a passionate opponent of slot machines who believes such statements might alert gamblers (or their families) to self-destructive behavior. For more than five years, Clymer has tried to pass the bill through the Gaming Oversight Committee; the vote this time was 14-11, with all "yea" votes cast by House Republicans.

In related (and, until now, unpublished) news, it appears that a large number of players **visit casinos not once in a while**, nor once a month, nor once a week, but **up to four or five times a week** — just slightly less often than many people go to work.

During the Pennsylvania Gaming Congress & Mid-Atlantic Racing Forum held at the Loews Philadelphia last month, Ron Baumann, general manager of Harrah's Chester Casino, said the customers in his database visited **an average of 4.5 times a week**. Robert J. DeSalvio, president of Sands Casino Resort in Bethlehem, acknowledged similar if slightly lower numbers. Wendy Hamilton, general manager of SugarHouse Casino here in Philly, said that a "large number" of her casino's customers came "three, four, five times a week."

That would presumably be one scary-looking monthly expense statement, a point that even the casinos concede. In a recent committee hearing, Sands' DeSalvio told Rep. Clymer that such a statement "**sorta reminds [problem gamblers] that they had a loss** and it might actually encourage them to try and chase the money."

The basis of this claim?

"I have a feeling," he said, but "I can't quite pinpoint the research."

