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The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention

Gambling: Always a loser's game

by Richard Land

In contrast to what those enticing billboards and clever radio and television ads for gambling say, gambling is always a loser's game.

Adults lose when their recreation turns, unexpectedly, into their addiction. Millions of American adults cannot control their urge to gamble. Their compulsion leads to crime, divorce, bankruptcy, jail, homelessness, and sometimes suicide.

The children of these gamblers lose when their parents leave them in casino childcare centers or in locked cars while they gamble. They lose when their parents can no longer buy them food, clothes, or medicine because the money for those necessities was lost at a casino, in a video gambling machine, or to a losing lottery number.

Local businesses lose when gambling-addicted employees steal from them to support their gambling habits. They lose when potential customers spend their paychecks to gamble instead of to buy groceries, clothes, furniture, houses, and cars.

Communities lose when their taxes must increase to pay for additional social infrastructure to support the casinos, such as more police protection, more courtrooms, and more jails.

The evil and tragedy wrought by casino gambling is especially obvious. Except for murder, every major crime goes up dramatically soon after a casino's arrival in a community. Rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, and auto theft all increase at alarming rates in the wake of casino gambling.

Even local and state governments are seduced by the gambling industry into aiding and abetting the problem. The Bible teaches us that God ordained the government to promote the good and to punish evildoers (Rom. 13). Yet gambling reduces government to the role of a bookie by promoting socially damaging behavior on the part of its citizenry for a percentage of the financial hit on the very people they are charged to protect.

Armed with these obvious outcomes, Christians should oppose any form of gambling as an acceptable and approved activity in our society. It is time for Christians to be salt and light and stand for right, even if it isn't popular.

Teach your children, your church members, and your community that gambling is always a loser's game.

Richard Land is President of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention.