

Idaho Statesman

Reader's View: Video gambling would bring ills of casinos to the Valley

By JONATHAN KRUTZ

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What do you think of a casino? Ada County commissioners want to know.

Two hundred rapid-bet video gambling devices [will be installed on public ground in a windowless room at the Ada County fairgrounds](#) next spring under a “remodeling” proposal from Treasure Valley Racing LLC, which has plans to double the number of machines later.

These “instant racing” video gambling machines claim to allow betting on old horse races: Read about the horses. Pick your winner. Place your bet. Watch the race. Somewhere in the software they even pretend to use parimutuel betting calculations for each race, using a strange fiction: a betting pool of one.

But the racing aspects are all irrelevant. Most gamblers just watch the spinning reels that fill the screen and hit the bet button as fast as once every five seconds — way faster than any horse race. [Check out these machines in action](#) below to see if you can spot the clips of old horse races being ignored in the corner.

Whether you call them a form of horse racing or not, these machines provide gamblers with the full spinning reel, rapid-bet slot machine experience. And they will give our community the full slot machine collateral damage.

“Addiction by Design” is the title of MIT Professor Natasha Schull’s well-researched book on the slot machine industry. A Canadian study shows that slot machines take in as much as 60 percent of their revenues from gamblers with an addiction problem.

“Casinos Cause Crime” is the title of a University of Illinois research report that concludes “12.4 percent of the crime observed in casino counties would not be there if casinos were absent.”

Businesses, in particular, should be alarmed at the prospect of a casino in town. Casinos don’t draw new money into an area; they just suck away money that would otherwise go to local businesses.

To their credit, the [Ada County commissioners have asked what you think](#). Come to their public hearing at 6 p.m. Tuesday (Nov. 26) at the Ada County Courthouse and let them know.

Promoters fast-tracked Idaho legislators into thinking these video gambling machines would save Idaho's horse industry. But the legislators never saw the horse slots in action, and promoters failed to note that racing involves just 2 percent of Idaho's horses.

"Instant racing" tortures the English language to evade Idaho's constitutional ban on casino gambling and slot machines. In reality, the horse slots are a lawsuit waiting to happen. It's an open question whether the governmental bodies that approve them will be immune.

We applaud the Ada County commissioners for their due diligence on this issue. They need our input and support. If you feel a casino has no place in the valley we all treasure as our home, please come to Tuesday's hearing or contact the commissioners directly at bocc1@adaweb.net or 287-7000.

Jonathan Krutz, Boise, is secretary of Stop Predatory Gambling Idaho and sits on the national board of the Stop Predatory Gambling Foundation.

Read more here: <http://www.idahostatesman.com/2013/11/26/2892824/video-gambling-would-bring-ills.html#storylink=cpy>