

Government should get out of gambling

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According to an article in the May 11 Albuquerque Journal, the New Mexico Gaming Control Board is proposing to change the process whereby patrons of racetrack casinos (racinos), and veteran and fraternal organizations can more speedily and efficiently make a complaint to the Gaming Control Board about a slot machine they claim is cheating them.

The gambling establishment would be required to have complaint forms on hand at all times. The patron and the establishment would be required to make out a complaint form immediately upon a dispute being raised.

If the amount of the dispute is over \$500, the club or racino would be required to submit the complaint forms to the Gaming Control Board within 24 hours, rather than the 48 hours required under the current rules. Video surveillance of the slot machine would be required to be maintained, along with any other documentation pertaining to the dispute.

There were also some proposed policy changes regarding banking procedures, advertising and naming of officials at clubs.

These new rules are being proposed in an effort to make the operations more “fair.”

This process reminds me of Captain Yossarian in the novel “Catch 22” repairing the injury to his good friend Snowden, who was wounded by anti-aircraft fire in their B-25 bomber during World War II.

Yossarian applies an antibiotic powder to a serious leg wound and carefully covers it with a white, sterile bandage. Feeling very proud of his handiwork, Yossarian notices blood leaking out from under Snowden’s flak jacket.

Opening the jacket, he finds that Snowden had been hit from behind by flak that had torn through ribs and destroyed his internal organs.

Yossarian’s good and able efforts had the appearance of doing some good, but the primary damage was not touched at all and Snowden died shortly thereafter.

It is comforting to the state officials to tinker with rules to make things more “fair,” but the basic nature of slot machines is deceptive, addictive and unfair.

According to recent research by Professor Natasha Dow Schull, a cultural anthropologist from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in her book “Addiction by Design,” slot machines are programmed to increase the speed of the machines, the time spent on the machine and the intensity of the play.

All these factors make the slot machines more and more addictive, and, having discovered the effect that the machines have on the gamblers, the manufacturers study how to program them to make them even more addictive.

It so much reminds us of the tobacco industry’s addition of nicotine to cigarettes to make them even more addictive.

Most people in government, receiving millions in taxes from the gambling operations, believe slot machines are an eternal fixture in the casino/government complex and the best that can be done is to tinker at the edges in an attempt at fairness. The government needs to re-examine its relationship with the gambling industry and realize that they are collaborating in the exploitation of its own citizens.

In a period of time when “fairness” is a standard buzzword among politicians, the government has institutionalized unfairness, allowing the rich gambling industry to become richer at the expense of the most vulnerable of its citizens.

It’s time for the government to get out of the predatory gambling business.