

Bill for credit card purchases of lotto tickets blasted

Charles D. Brunt / Journal Staff
Writer



A bill that would allow state lottery players to buy tickets with credit cards is a bad bet for low-income New Mexicans, according to the chairman of the anti-gambling organization Stop Predatory Gambling New Mexico.

“In state after state, including North and South Carolina, Nebraska, Texas, Florida, California and several other states, the studies by state governments and universities have unequivocally proven that the majority of revenue to state lotteries comes from minorities, the poor, and the less-educated,” said organization chairman Guy Clark.

“Senate Bill 355 would extend the reach of the lottery, and means that these disadvantaged groups would suffer more than they do now,” Clark said.

The bill, sponsored by Sen. John Arthur Smith, D-Deming and chairman of the powerful Senate Finance Committee, is designed to boost lottery ticket sales and increase revenues for the lottery’s primary beneficiary, the Legislative Lottery Scholarship program.

The scholarship fund pays the majority of tuition for eligible students attending state-funded colleges and universities. In recent years, however, the demand for lottery scholarships has outstripped available funding, and lawmakers and universities have had to supplement the lottery fund and tuitions.

More than 80 percent of people who buy lottery tickets get them at convenience stores, according to New Mexico Lottery CEO David Barden. Statistics also show that nearly 73 percent of people who gas up at convenience stores never go inside, he told The Associated Press. He hopes lottery players will soon be able to buy lottery tickets at the gas pump, once the bill passes and convenience stores upgrade their “pay at the pump” stations.

“Pay at the pump is basically a shrewd business tactic for a toxic product,” Clark said.

In the meantime, the legislation would pave the way for online and mobile lottery sales. The bill limits credit card purchases of lottery tickets to a maximum of \$20. It has been assigned to the Senate Finance and Corporations & Transportation committees.