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State could wind up like Atlantic City

The Pareto Principle: A rule of thumb stating that 80 percent of outcomes are attributed to 20 percent of a cause; also referred to as the "law of the vital few." In the world of gambling, this equals minorities, women, low wage earners and seniors.

Disproportionately, casino revenue comes from our most exploited and vulnerable, not those with a layover at O'Hare or a couple celebrating an anniversary. No, those casual gamblers represent only 4 percent of revenue.

Illinoisians may soothe themselves, believing that addiction affects only a small percentage with a few pesky unintended consequences. On the contrary, this addiction is not a mere hiccup in one's otherwise normal life -- it is decimating and way too often life-ending.

No dollar amount can represent what a lost or impaired person means to families. Chicago will be surprised in how short of a time these "unintended" consequences of increased bankruptcy, crime, child neglect and suicide will occur and will be left with fixing broken lives and disintegrated families, more than exist now.

I urge Illinois lawmakers to read the mounds of studies available as diligently as they are seduced by a casino industry spread sheet. Reckless gambling saturation is neither benign nor economically honorable. It is not if, but when, Illinois will suffer the same fate as Atlantic City, now known for its socioeconomic fallout.

We often hear "if it just saves one life" as an argument for law reform. Should this not be the same righteous mantra when considering gambling expansion in Illinois? Declaring enough is enough would preserve the quality of life of thousands of Illinois citizens. No decent or civilized government builds or repairs itself on the heels of creating insurmountable debt and anguish. Irresponsible gambling expansion only widens the inequality gap, one spin at a time.

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