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Diana Duran a victim of casinos

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Various opinion writers speak of Secretary of State Dianna Duran's misappropriation of funds as being part of the "culture of corruption" that has plagued New Mexico for decades. But most of the cases cited are of public officials who used the power and perks of their office to enrich themselves or to extend their political power.

Duran's criminality is spectacularly different from these examples, but does point out one of the most potent "cultures of corruption" in the state: legalized casino gambling.

Duran misappropriated funds not to enrich herself, but to feed a powerful addiction to slot machine gambling.

Her lawyer got it right when quoted in the Albuquerque Journal, "Dianna Duran is but a woman whose unfortunate involvement in the charged offenses is more equitable to miserable and hopeless enslavement to a growing disorder than to anything even remotely resembling legitimate societal menace."

Secretary Duran served in local government as a county clerk in Otero County and served as a state senator for 18 years. In neither case did she show signs of political corruption.

She had no criminal record prior to becoming addicted to slot machines. The "corruption" came straight out of the casino.

Regarding the court hearings on her sentencing, Duran should receive punishment for her criminal behavior, but it should be tempered by consideration of her victimization at the hands of the gambling industry and the custodial care of her grandchildren.

Duran is one of hundreds of New Mexico residents who had been solid citizens prior to becoming addicted to gambling, who then resorted to criminal behavior to support their addiction. Multiple surveys of Gamblers Anonymous attendees reveal that this pattern is the rule, not the exception.

It is time for the state of New Mexico to get out of the predatory gambling business.