

Lottery bill was a Trojan horse for slot

<http://www.abqjournal.com/730438/opinion/lottery-bill-was-a-trojan-horse-for-slots.html>

By Dr. Guy C. Clark / Chairman, Stop Predatory Gambling New Mexico

Friday, February 26th, 2016 at 12:02am

Senate Bill 180, purporting to be the plan to rescue lottery scholarships, had a sentence buried in the middle of the bill that gave the lottery authority the ability to contract for “lottery gaming systems.” This phrase seemed to befuddle most legislators, media people and ordinary citizens in New Mexico, because it is not terminology that we are familiar with.

Those of us who are aware of gambling activities throughout the nation know that this phrase can mean video lottery terminals, basically slot machines run by at least 10 state lotteries.

If this sounds unreasonable, Google “lottery gaming systems,” and you are provided on the first page with a list of about ten slot machine manufacturers, including Bally, Scientific Games, International Gaming Technologies and several others. All of these slot manufacturers do a substantial amount of business supplying states with these systems, many of which are video lottery terminals, providing various types of casino games.

Several of the local lobbyists pushing this bill are contracted lobbyists with some of these slot manufacturers. They would have been richly rewarded if they had been successful in getting this bill passed into law and facilitated a slot machine lottery system.

In the last hearing of SB 180 in the House Ways and Means Committee, several legislators brought up their concerns that “lottery gaming systems” appears to open the door to video gaming machines. The bill’s sponsor, Sen. John Arthur Smith, and the CEO of the state lottery, David Barden, testified that it didn’t mean video gaming machines, but when pressed by the legislators were never able to give a satisfactory answer to what the phrase actually meant.

That appeared to scuttle the bill in an 8-4 vote against. When asked if he would just drop the “lottery gaming systems” language from the bill, Smith adamantly refused.

I have talked with two prominent local attorneys who have either been in the state Legislature or have worked with the state Legislature for decades. They both thought the lottery authority was trying to sneak language through this bill to give them authority to operate slot machines for the state lottery.

The phrase can probably be stretched to mean several things, including current technology now in use in the state, but on the Internet, to several states, and at least a handful of slot machine manufacturing companies, the phrase “lottery gaming systems” does mean video lottery terminals – aka slot machines. After SB 180 was defeated, Smith said, “We’ll be back again next year.” So he plans on pushing this hugely flawed lottery proposal in the next session.

Recent lottery scandals in the United States involving at least six states show that state lotteries are as prone to corruption and dishonesty as other forms of gambling. Smith should be more careful about the people he associates with.

He may have been conned by the state lottery with misinformation, or he could just possibly be in favor of using slot machines for the lottery.

We are pretty certain the people of his district didn’t know that he was pushing a bill that had the potential to place slot machines in convenience stores, gas stations, barber shops, etc., throughout their district. A little research on Google might help them figure it out.

Perhaps they can convince the senator to disassociate himself from David Barden and the deceitful efforts of the state lottery system.

State-sponsored gambling is an exploitive and failed policy and does not need to be expanded.