

KENTUCKY COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
Resolution Against Gambling Casinos
Adopted at the 46th Annual Assembly, October 14-15, 1993

PREAMBLE

Because the Kentucky Council of Churches is "...called to work together for justice and peace, through: preserving the dignity of all God's children in a global context; including the pursuit of dialogue and reconciliation; building relationships between races, sexes, and classes; defending the rights of the oppressed; and meeting human needs", we now must address together the matter of gambling casinos. Gambling casinos are increasingly suggested to citizens in state after state as a panacea for civic financial distress.

Although our member communions hold diverse moral positions on gambling, we are united in our belief that greed for unearned monetary gain destroys individuals and eventually corrodes the fabric of social trust upon which civic life must rely.

As Christians, we believe that God calls each person to useful work, and provides talents and gifts that may be fruitfully exercised to support the self and family through the exchange of goods, labor, and services. Further, we believe that each person is called to contribute to the well being of community through their work and their civic participation, including the payment of legitimate taxes to support government services.

Christian scripture also endorses support for civil authority, and payment of taxes, "rendering to Caesar that which is Caesar's," so that human beings may live together in justice, peace, and harmony. Within the body politic, Christians are committed to building up the common good, because of the commandment that we love God and love our neighbor. For the Christian, the common good, therefore, must be established by just and honest means. In a democratic society, government must persuade its citizens to support with their taxes the programs the citizens believe will be instrumental in nurturing and protecting all members of society and efficacious for productive economy and just relations among all residents of that political entity.

REASONS FOR OPPOSITION TO GAMBLING CASINOS IN KENTUCKY

Gambling casino supporters claim that gambling helps citizens, municipalities, and states, by providing non-tax generated revenues, encouraging tourism, and creating jobs. Careful legislative controls, they claim, can deal with such issues as organized crime, prostitution, compulsive gambling, and the collection of tax revenue.

The experience of places like Atlantic City, New Jersey, and small gambling towns such as Deadwood, South Dakota, yields far different results. Earl L. Grinos, writing in the Chicago Sun-Times (Dec. 7, 1991) points out that a "gambling operation is not like a factory or a retail store. There are givers in the world of commerce and there are takers. Gambling is a taker. ...When wages go for gambling instead of the purchase of local goods and services, hoped-for economic spinoffs often fail to materialize. There are fewer restaurants in Atlantic City today, for example, than before the casinos were opened. Gambling attracts gamblers, not tourists. What's more, because of reduced purchases, revenues from sales taxes go down."

In many states considering gambling casinos, an increase in the state income tax of less than one tenth of one percent can produce the same revenues as 10 riverboat casinos, without creating one new government position or one new agency, according to University of Nevada Professor of Management and Public Administration, William N. Thompson, in testimony given before the Indiana Senate in 1989.

Other studies suggest that the majority of jobs supposedly created by casinos are low-wage hourly positions, rather than year-round salaried jobs which are often filled by non-residents moving into the state from positions with the casino operation elsewhere.

Gambling casinos increase the likelihood for addiction to compulsive gambling. A high percentage of compulsive or problem gamblers, in order to continue their addiction and belief that for a dollar invested they can become a millionaire, engage in tax evasion, domestic theft and abuse, embezzlement, and forgery. Every compulsive

gambler negatively impacts on 7 to 17 people. 15% of wives of compulsive gamblers are battered. The suicide rate among compulsive gamblers is 20%. With half the population of Illinois, Maryland already has at least 50,000 compulsive gamblers and 80,000 problem gamblers who are annually costing the state \$1.5 billion and who have gone into debt \$4 billion to finance their habits.

Despite strict laws prohibiting gambling by teens, a recent study indicted that 64% of New Jersey youths gamble at casinos.

In the now legalized charitable gambling in Kentucky, overhead is low, and the revenue from charitable games of chance remains in the state to provide needed community services and to support various religious institutions such as parochial schools. With extremely low stakes, such gambling is less likely to lead to family financial distress or other social problems. Casino operations, on the other hand, to be profitable, must allow for much higher stakes, allow people to succumb to gambling more money away than they intended, and the profits, after taxes, are usually taken out of state, and not reinvested in productive ways in the local economy.

RESOLUTION

We, the delegates to the 46th Annual Assembly of the Kentucky Council of Churches, representing the eleven member communions and individual congregations holding membership in the Kentucky Council of Churches, do make the following resolution of our opposition to the legalization of gambling casinos in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

WHEREAS the legalization of commercial gambling casinos as a means of producing public revenues is being considered in the Commonwealth of Kentucky; and

WHEREAS we are convinced that legalized gambling casinos in Kentucky would create costly economic, social and criminal problems for our citizenry; and

WHEREAS we believe in fair and progressive taxation of all residents by their consent rather than fiscal reliance on a "quick fix" source of revenues garnered from taxes on gambling casino profits, which in the long run may prove more costly and less stable as an economic base for government operations.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, THAT the Kentucky Council of Churches, in coalition with other such religious and civic groups as may share their convictions, do commit ourselves to oppose legalized gambling casinos in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

FURTHER, BE IT RESOLVED, the Kentucky Council of Churches will appoint a special committee to create and build the coalition of opponents of legalized gambling casinos in Kentucky, and will establish a special fund to receive contributions from such opponents to aid in our public relations campaign to prevent gambling casinos in our Commonwealth. The Kentucky Council of Churches will open this special fund with a contribution of \$1,000 from its general operating budget, from the line item listed as "program support and development." The Coalition Against Casinos will elect its own officers, designate a treasurer to oversee the funds collected, file all appropriate documents with the state government, and provide for a certified audit at the conclusion of its campaign.

KENTUCKY COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

Addendum to the Resolution against Gambling Casinos, adopted October, 1993

Adopted by the Executive Board on March 2, 1999

Whereas the Kentucky General Assembly has adopted legislation which requires that all lottery income now be committed to a scholarship program to help Kentucky high school graduates attend a college or university in the Commonwealth; and

Whereas the Kentucky Lottery is facing increasing competition from Indiana riverboats and other forms of gambling, and current lottery income has been flat or decreasing in recent years; and

Whereas it appears likely that the Kentucky Lottery Corporation will attempt to have legislation enacted in the 2000 regular session of the Kentucky General Assembly to allow the operation of such electronic forms of "convenience gambling" such as a video lottery terminals (a euphemism for a lottery-operated slot machine); video poker machines; and video keno, in order to increase revenues to support the now popular idea of scholarships for Kentucky's young people; and

Whereas it has been demonstrated in numerous studies that such electronic gambling is the most addictive form of gambling, and is especially attractive to the young; and

Whereas thoroughbred race tracks are attempting to expand their market and to attract new gamblers through the establishment of off-track-betting parlors without local approval; and

Whereas Keeneland Race Track, Dreamport, Inc. (Harrah's Casinos, which owns the "Glory of Rome" / Caesar's-Indiana riverboat opposite Louisville); and G-Tech (the corporation which has the lottery franchise for the Commonwealth of Kentucky), have formed a partnership to purchase Turfway Race Course, whose previous owner and CEO were among the most vigorous advocates for gambling casinos at race tracks; and

Whereas Keeneland has now softened its position of opposition to gambling casinos, and has stated that Keeneland now believes that "the people of Kentucky" should decide about future gambling; and

Whereas Governor Paul Patton has said that he would support a referendum on this issue;

Therefore, be it hereby resolved, that the Kentucky Council of Churches will oppose the expansion of gambling opportunities in the Commonwealth, whether by the Kentucky Lottery Corporation, or by the thoroughbred racing industry, which will include the use of:

- video lottery terminals (VLTS)
- video keno machines
- video poker machines
- slot machines and other kinds of electronic gambling machines;
- casino style operations;
- off-track betting parlors established without local approval.

Further, the Kentucky Council of Churches shall work vigorously with such other partners in a coalition to oppose enabling legislation for the Lottery Corporation, and/or a statewide referendum on any gambling expansion as defined above.