

SO YOU WANT TO BE A MILLIONAIRE?

By Tom Elliff

So you want to be a millionaire? Well there is one group that doesn't want you to have that privilege. As a matter of fact this group persistently lobbies for a measure which insures that financial prosperity, including "millionaire-hood," will remain only a dream for almost everyone. Ironically, as in most "too-good-to-be true" schemes, this group waves false promises in their attempt to generate your support for their pet legislation. I am referring to the pro-lottery folks; the folks who believe that there can be some redeeming value in the state's promotion of gambling as a lifestyle.

Flying the "Education" banner, the pro-lottery folks forget that the major principles of life are more "caught" than "taught." Sure...maybe a little of their over-stated revenues just might trickle down to the classroom. Unfortunately its value will be lost on a generation of children who are led to believe that the really big bucks come, not with diligence or education, but by sacrificing grocery money in hopes of buying the winning number.

Let's get real here! It's a fact that an extremely small handful of folks become millionaires by gambling. But what happens to the rest of the \$600 billion (Yes, that's a "b"!) wagered annually. Who gets that money? Not the one in five homeless who state unequivocally that gambling is a major factor in their dereliction; not the individuals with household incomes under \$10,000 who wager nearly three times more on the lottery than those with incomes exceeding \$50,000; and certainly not the people who lose approximately \$50 billion (There's that "b" again!) in legal gambling each year. Who gets the money? It shouldn't surprise you to hear that it's the same folks who spend \$4-500 million annually in advertising campaigns often having the impoverished as their target audience.

But even this doesn't tell the whole story! The National Gambling Impact Study gives us a closer look at the kind of education gambling really provides. Their revelations will cause you to shudder. Las Vegas, the gambler's paradise, boasts the highest rate of suicide in the nation. In Iowa, the twelve counties with the highest bankruptcy rates just coincidentally had gambling facilities either in or adjacent to them. Forty-seven percent of a member group surveyed by Gamblers Anonymous said they definitely had plans to kill themselves; two-thirds had contemplated suicide and 77% said they wanted to die. Eighteen percent of 1,100 people surveyed in rescue missions admitted that gambling was a cause of their homelessness.

By example, the lottery teaches children that education, hard work, perseverance and good management are not nearly so important as using the electric bill money for lottery tickets and sweating out the results in front of the television. Meanwhile, local business people really do get educated. They learn that a state-run lottery clearly puts government in competition with local businesses for the dollars of its constituents.

There's nothing wrong with wanting to be a millionaire. But there is something sickeningly wrong with any society that is willing to gamble the future of its families and the ethic of its children on a practice which clearly contradicts Divine wisdom as well as human logic. "It is the hand of the diligent that shall ultimately bear rule; but the slothful shall live under the burden of forced labor." (Proverbs 12:24)

Oklahoma and her Queen City and Capitol, Oklahoma City, have, thus far, shrugged off deceitful and debilitating practices which have brought other states and cities down. We have an opportunity to be a shining example of what happens when good and God-fearing people realize that the best education rests on the three-fold pillars of diligence, integrity and faith. Let's stick to our principles and ultimately the world will beat a path to our door. Right now, sticking to those principles means dumping the lottery.

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