

FACTS ABOUT STATE OPERATED LOTTERIES

LOTTERIES TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE POOR

Lotteries “are more regressive than most other forms of gambling since individuals in lower income brackets spend proportionally more money on them than do persons with higher incomes (4),” according to the The Commission on the Review of the National Policy on Gambling. In Georgia in zip codes with average household incomes below \$20,000, the lottery sold \$249 worth of lottery tickets per resident per year, while in zip codes with incomes over \$40,000 per capita spending on lottery tickets was only \$97 (5).

Lotteries for education can discriminate against the poor. The Georgia Lottery is an excellent example of the discriminatory nature of lotteries. This lottery offers scholarship assistance to Georgia high school graduates with a B average who attend a Georgia college, university or technical institute (6). What this program overlooks is the reality that fewer poor students will benefit from this program because fewer of them graduate from high school, and those who do graduate have lower GPAs on average than their more affluent counterparts. The result is that those most in need of financial assistance for higher education opportunities are less likely to qualify for it. Of the 16,376 students who received HOPE scholarships for the 1994-95 academic year, the average family income was \$44,876. The average Georgia household income in 1993 was \$31,663 (7).

LOTTERIES CAUSE GOVERNMENT TO PREY ON ITS PEOPLE

States have targeted specific socioeconomic groups. The Illinois Lottery rented billboards in some of Chicago’s most economically depressed neighborhood’s and advertised the lottery with the slogan “This could be your ticket out (10).”

Compulsive gamblers find it difficult to resist buying lottery tickets because of the constant, aggressive advertising of the lottery by the states. Dr. Valerie Lorenz notes that when compulsive gamblers who are struggling against the urge to buy lottery tickets hear ads for the lottery they “cover their ears or their heads. They’ll say ‘I wish I could leave the state.’ But that wouldn’t help. It’s all over the country (14).”

LOTTERIES DO VERY LITTLE TO PAY FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

Lottery states spend less of their budgets on education. Oftentimes the states earmarked less of their general funds for education as lottery funds were contributed. The result was that there was no actual increase in education spending (15).

LOTTERIES CONTRIBUTE TO COMPULSIVE GAMBLING

A person can become addicted to gambling on lotteries. In a question and answer section of Paradigm magazine, published by the Illinois Institute for Addiction Recovery, the magazine responds to the question, “Can a person become addicted to bingo or the lottery?” Their response, “Yes! We have treated numerous adults from across the country experiencing severe negative consequences as a result of their inability to stop playing bingo, the lottery, pull tabs, sports betting, etc (31).” According to the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse 34% of

the people who entered publicly funded treatment centers in Texas said that the lottery was their most problematic gambling activity (32).

Gamblers Anonymous meetings have increased. Since video lottery terminals were introduced in Oregon, the number of Gambler's Anonymous meetings in Oregon has climbed from 3 a week to 30. Calls to a statewide gambling hotline rose from less than 3,000 in 1995 to more than 4,000 in 1996. A 1996 study of gamblers entering treatment programs in Oregon found that 81% gambled primarily on video poker machines (34).

State lotteries are dependent on compulsive gamblers. Clotfelter and Cook conclude that 10% of those who bet on the lottery account for 50% of the money bet (36).

The average compulsive gambler is the equivalent of one year of salary in debt before he or she seeks help.

66% of compulsive gamblers turn to crime at some time in order to support their gambling habit or to pay off gambling debts.

15% of compulsive gamblers end up in prison (42).

The effects of compulsive gambling hurt many areas of life. A survey of compulsive gamblers found that 22 percent divorced because of gambling, 40 percent had lost or quit a job due to gambling, 49 percent stole from work to pay gambling debts, 63 percent had contemplated suicide, and 79 percent said they wanted to die (45).

WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT LOTTERIES

Decide to get involved. Stopping the spread of gambling in all of its forms is going to be up to the citizens of this country. Too many lawmakers have shown that they will not resist gambling unless they hear from the people.

Get to know your state representative and state senator. Visit them if you can, Attend their meetings in your area and share your opposition to the lottery. Write to them about your opposition.

Provide lottery information to the people in your church. Ask your pastor about including ERLC materials or materials from your state or other local moral concerns agency in bulletins. Print information in the bulletin or include bulletin inserts.

Write letters to the editor. Share your observations about the problems with lotteries.

Pray for God's power. Lotteries are a form of gambling that destroy people's lives and violate God's design of trust in Him for one's livelihood. Therefore, we can expect God's help if we commit ourselves to make a change and ask His help in accomplishing it.

To order additional information regarding facts about State Operated Lotteries, please contact the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission at (615) 244-2495.

(4) Gambling in America: Final Report, p.158.

(5) Charles Walston, "Has the Gamble Paid Off?" Atlanta Constitution (February 25, 1996), p. D1.

(6) Georgia Student Finance Commission. The Hope Scholarship: Helping Outstanding Students Educationally, p. 2.

- (7) Marsha Davis, Gary Henry, and Thad Hall, "Evaluation of the HOPE Scholarship Program," Georgia Council for School Performance, 1995. Cited by John Hill, "Theft By Consent: The Lottery's Economic and Social Impact on Alabama" (Birmingham: The Alabama Family Alliance, 1996), p. 4.
- (10) Joseph A. Shapiro, "America's Gambling Fever," U.S. News and World Report (January 15, 1996), p. 60.
- (14) Cited by Joshua Shenk, "Everyone's a Loser," The Washington Monthly (July 1995), p. 24.
- (15) Peter Keating, "Lotto Fever: We All Lose," Money (May 1996), p. 144.
- (31) Paradigm (Peoria: Illinois Institute for Addiction Recovery, Spring 1997), p. 2.
- (32) Lynn Wallisch, Gambling in Texas: 1995 Surveys of Adult and Adolescent Behavior: Executive Summary (Austin: Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, 1996), p. 9.
- (34) Jeff Mapes, "Gambling on Addiction," p. A16.
- (36) Clotfelter and Cook, Selling Hope, p. 241.
- (42) Valerie Lorenz, Statement, April 27, 1997.
- (45) Cited by Senator Paul Simon, Report to the Senate, July 31, 1995.