



Creating a Socially Responsible Casino Industry

Policy-makers should take advantage of opportunities to create not only a financially viable casino business, but also one that improves the quality of life for communities that host casinos as well as for neighboring communities. The following are steps in that direction:

- **Avoid earmarking all gaming tax revenues to specific government programs.** State lotteries justifiably have been criticized for failure to live up to promises, for instance, of increased funding for primary and secondary education. When new revenues are earmarked for particular uses, it is too easy for government decision-makers to offset these new revenues by an equivalent decrease in monies that would have been allocated from other sources. So, no net increase in spending sometimes occurs. Programs should be funded on their merits, not according to the vicissitudes of any particular revenue stream.
- **License only casino companies that demonstrate a history of community involvement.** And require companies to demonstrate involvement in the local community when licenses are periodically re-evaluated. Companies should demonstrate that they encourage their employees to volunteer their time and talents to educational, arts, and social service efforts. They should also demonstrate a track record of corporate gifts to charitable organizations.
- **Take steps to prevent underage gaming.** Restrict minors from entering gaming areas. Provide stiff penalties for casino employees who knowingly permit minors to play casino games. Provide stiff penalties for minors who break the law. Require casino companies to develop and implement programs to combat underage gaming.
- **Take steps to prevent and treat pathological gaming.** Pending the results of a comprehensive needs assessment, require that casinos help fund research on pathological gaming or pathological gaming helplines. Require that casinos make available to employees and customers information on pathological gaming and where to go for treatment. Require casino employees to be trained to recognize the signs of pathological gaming. Consider allocating a portion of casino tax revenue to help fund reputable, effective prevention, awareness, and treatment programs. Authorize the Gaming Commission to commission a valid study of the prevalence of pathological gaming statewide.
- Policy-makers and the public must understand that pathological gambling exists in locations which do not have casinos. It exists where there are no lotteries, no horse racing, and/or no gaming machines. It is a ubiquitous social problem. The advent of a casino in a state or community can bring this problem to public consciousness, however. The advent of a casino also presents a state or community with an opportunity and resources to address the problem more substantively.

- **Require consideration of local input in the licensing process.** Although the Gaming Commission should have ultimate authority in all licensing decisions, the Commission should consider in its deliberations the concerns of local communities as expressed through polls, advisory elections, and endorsements by government bodies and non-governmental associations. The consistency of local zoning ordinances and long range development plans with proposed casino projects and collateral development should also be considered.