



Date February 6, 2015

TO: Chair Holvey
House Committee on Business and Labor

FROM: David Elsbernd
President
Voices of Problem Gambling Recovery, Inc

SUBJECT: HB 2548

Chair Holvey and members of the committee; I am David Elsbernd, President for Voices of Problem Gambling Recovery, Inc., (VPGR). Voices of Problem Gambling Recovery is an organization based in Portland Oregon made up of persons in recovery from gambling problems, their family members, and others concerned about problem gambling. We are fundamentally not for nor against legalized gambling, however, do we not support this bill for a number of important reasons.

Oregon has easier access to legalized gambling that almost any other state with over 2,000 video lottery retail outlets, five Native American casinos, and a myriad of social and charitable gaming activities. Our state does not need expansion of another major gambling option, especially one that appears more attractive to younger persons, which poker games and poker tournaments do.

By incentivizing businesses to operate poker games and poker tournaments through potentially lucrative compensation laws (e.g., charging seat fees and collecting up to 18% of prize pools), this bill will spur the growth of a card room industry in Oregon.

Creating a card room industry will hurt our economy and our citizens. More money lost in card rooms will equate to lower Oregon State Lottery revenues producing a negative state budget impact. More importantly, the expansion of card rooms will result in an increased incidence of problem

gambling. Each problem gambler creates thousands of dollars in social costs and tears at the fabric of Oregon families and communities.

This bill appears to be blind to social concerns related to card rooms. Unlike card room legislation in other states, there are no age restrictions for card room patrons, there are no responsible gaming requirements such as posting information on gambling addiction, there are no taxes or fees set aside to address problem gambling, there are no betting or prize pool limits, and there are no restrictions on patrons using credit to gamble.

Even if this bill was better written to put measures in place to reduce gambling related harm, any bill that expands the number and reach of card rooms in Oregon is a bad idea. More card rooms will result in more problem gamblers, have a negative impact on the state budget, and produce terrible social costs.

On behalf of all the members of Voices of Problem Gambling Recovery, Inc., and countless others that share our view, we urge you to do the right thing and kill this bill.

We appreciate this opportunity to comment on this legislation and would be happy to address any question you may have.

Respectfully,

David Elsbernd
President