

INFORMATION REGARDING ARKANSAS GENERAL ELECTION BALLOT ISSUE 5 (CASINO GAMBLING)
Arkansas Committee for Ethics Policy (a companion organization to the Arkansas Faith & Ethics Council)
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Issue 5 is a proposed amendment to the Arkansas state constitution. If passed by voters in November, it will allow one casino in each of three counties, Boone, Miller, and Washington. The owners of those casinos, who call their enterprise “Arkansas Wins in 2016,” will be out of state business interests located in Missouri (in or near Branson). They have already announced that the Cherokee tribe (which, if news reports are correct, has given or pledged over a million dollars to fund the effort), which owns and/or operates nine casinos in Oklahoma, will run the casino in Washington County.

This proposal is rather transparent. These out of state interests are seeking to hoodwink Arkansas voters into granting them the exclusive rights to own and operate very lucrative casinos in those three Arkansas locales. They reap the enormous profits, and leave the good people of the three designated counties, specifically, and all Arkansans in general, to clean up the mess caused by their tawdry business and predatory practices.

Perhaps the most pernicious of all the objections to Issue 5 is how its supporters want us Arkansans to literally impose casinos on our neighbors in Boone, Miller, and Washington Counties. Will they have any greater say than the rest of us? No. They can cast a vote – but other than that – the state vote will prevail, even if the voters in the three target counties vote overwhelmingly against Issue 5. This is the biggest reason we should reject Issue 5, but there are others.

All gambling enterprises must be predatory in order to thrive or even to survive. Up to 60% of casino profits come from addicted or problem gamblers. If casinos or state lotteries relied on casual, occasional gamblers, they could not stay in business. Now, the question begs, what happens when too much of a person’s wages go to the slot machines or convenience store for lottery tickets and their families are left wanting for medical care, food, shelter, or other of life’s necessities? That’s right. The social network – the one funded by tax dollars – go to rescue those in need. No one objects to helping out the needy, but wouldn’t it be nice if so many weren’t in need because Dad can’t stay away from the video poker machines and slots.

Casino gambling creates all sorts of economic and social problems. Not only do social welfare costs rise dramatically, but a greater toll is taken on the criminal justice system. It cannot be refuted that crime, property crimes (burglaries and thefts) and crimes against the person, such as spousal and child abuse and aggravated robberies, escalate within proximity to a casino. Money is the lifeblood of problem or addicted gamblers, and some of them will not be deterred by the law in order to get it.

And, lastly, for believers this is a no brainer. Gambling, in all its various forms, violates a number of Biblical principles. Here are some just to name a few.

- 1) The Bible emphasizes the sovereignty of God, while gambling looks to chance and luck.
- 2) God directs us to work creatively and steadfastly, but gambling fosters a something-for-nothing, cavalier attitude toward money and how it should be gained.
- 3) The Bible requires us to be responsible stewards with our possessions and to take care of our families, while gambling involves reckless abandon, selfishness, and disregard for the well-being of others.
- 4) We are warned against materialism, but the heart of gambling is the essence of such greed.
- 5) The strongest Biblical mandate is found in the command that we love our neighbor as ourselves. When we don’t do all we can to prevent gambling predators from exploiting the weakest and most vulnerable among us, can we truly say we love our neighbor as we should?

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