



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 1, 2011

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GOVERNMENT PUSH TO EXPAND GAMBLING IS A BAD BET FOR AMERICANS

The new website, www.GetGovernmentOutOfGambling.org, launched by the Institute for American Values, sheds light on the numerous—and significant—social ills caused by the partnership of governments with legalized gambling. Contrary to what elected officials would have citizens believe, state-sponsored gambling is bad public policy that costs all taxpayers.

With little public input, the government has used—and abused—its power and influence to allow gambling to become more convenient and addictive to average Americans, especially taking advantage of senior citizens, minorities, and the working class.

New York, NY—August 1, 2011—The Institute for American Values launched the new website GetGovernmentOutOfGambling.org to shine a light on the downside of legalized gambling. It highlights the many problems that surround the intersection of governments and the gambling industry. In short, this toxic relationship is a bad bet for Americans. Governments and the gambling industry tout the jobs and tax revenue that comes from legalized gambling. But they consistently minimize, and often completely ignore, the many painful costs. Studies consistently show that wherever casinos open up there is an increase in crime, divorce, bankruptcy and other social ills. Once those costs are totaled up, gambling often extracts more wealth from communities than it creates.

But don't count on seeing that message in the slick advertisements paid for by the gambling industry.

“Nor will you hear this truth from elected officials who peddle the benefits of gambling to their communities,” says **Paul Davies**, an award winning investigative journalist and editor of the new website. According to Davies:

“More and more state governments have essentially entered in joint-ventures with the gambling industry. Rather than create wealth, this misguided public policy extracts wealth from the very citizens public officials are elected to serve and protect, especially those who can least afford it. Elected officials like to tout the tax revenue and jobs but ignore or downplay the many social ills that outweigh the benefits.”

Our elected officials know this to be true, although most will never admit to it. In fact, a study done for Congress in 1999 actually recommended a temporary halt in the expansion of gambling to study the impact. But the halt never occurred. Instead, over the last three decades gambling has exploded across the country without much thought or insight as to the long-term ramifications.

And the ramifications are significant. GetGovernmentOutofGambling.com reveals, among other sobering statistics, that:

- **The industry preys on poor people**--gamblers with household incomes of less than \$10,000 bet nearly three times as much on lotteries as those with incomes above \$100,000.
- Studies indicate that **new high-tech slot machines can be highly addictive** and the American Psychiatric Association recognizes pathological gambling as a medical disorder with elements of addiction similar to alcohol and drug addiction.
- **There are 850,000 slot machines in the U.S., twice as many as ATMs**, and each year Americans spend more on them than movies, baseball, and theme parks combined.
- **Americans lost \$91 billion on all forms of gambling in 2006**, the most recent figure available.
- **Pathological and problem gamblers in the United States cost society about \$5 billion a year** in productivity losses, social services and creditor losses.
- **Wherever governments legalize gambling, personal bankruptcies increased.** In fact, bankruptcy rates increased more than 100 percent in counties that legalized casinos.

GetGovernmentOutofGambling.com is *the* website that shines a light into the relationship between government and legalized gambling. It highlights the key issues, provides context, offers insightful comment, and generates original reporting available to blogs, newspapers, and magazines. It is the source for news on the gambling industry and how it truly affects communities across the country.

THE INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN VALUES is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to studying and strengthening civil society.

PAUL DAVIES is the Maggie Walker Fellow at the Institute for American Values and editor of GetGovernmentOutofGambling.org. Davies is a journalist who has worked at *The Wall Street Journal*, *Worth* magazine, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, and the *Philadelphia Daily News*, among others. A series of editorials he wrote on casino gambling at *The Inquirer* was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in 2009. An investigative series on predatory lending he wrote at the *Daily News* was a finalist for a Gerald Loeb Award. He graduated from the University of Delaware and has a masters in journalism from Columbia University, where he was also a Knight-Bagehot Fellow.

For more information about GetGovernmentOutofGambling.com, or to schedule an interview with Paul Davies, please contact Sarah Barrett at 212-246-3942 or sbarrett@americanvalues.org.