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Office of the Divisional Commander

January 29, 2007

The Honorable Nancy Dahlstrom
The Honorable Harry Crawford
Alaska House of Representatives
State Capitol, Juneau, AK 99801-1182

RE: Proposed Gambling Constitutional Amendment

I recently learned of your intent to sponsor a constitutional amendment this legislative session to prohibit for-profit gambling in Alaska and wanted to express my appreciation for your leadership in addressing this important issue.

In other areas of the country where legalized gambling is welcomed, The Salvation Army has seen firsthand the impact and destruction caused in the lives of many who chase after the promise of riches and end up caught in the snare of addictive lifestyles. In Las Vegas, for instance, The Salvation Army recently expanded its Adult Rehabilitation Program for substance abusing adults to treat individuals with gambling addictions. In the short time the program has been open, they have documented that close to fifty percent of those who experience alcohol/drug addictions are also addicted to (or at significantly higher risk) for co-addictive behaviors, including gambling.

In Alaska, where we have some of the highest rates of substance abuse per capita in the nation, it is encouraging to know we have legislators like yourselves, ready to step forward and tackle these tough issues.

Thank you again, for your leadership. Know that I continue to pray God's blessing upon you as you serve the people of Alaska.

God bless you.

Sincerely,

Douglas Tollerud, Major
Divisional Commander
Alaska Division

Testimony for HJR
By Pamela Samash
HC 66 Box 29715
Nenana, AK 99760
907-832-1850

Dear Representatives,

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony today.

This letter is in regards to gambling and my family's experience.

My mother became addicted to gambling. She had always been against gambling before and had no addictions to anything but smoking. She worked for what she had, believed in God, raised us kids as best as she knew how.

What opened the door for her she shared with me was she became depressed because her mother passed away. She was also feeling rejected by people who were near and dear to her. My step dad took her to a casino to "lift her spirits" and get her mind off her troubles.

At first it was all for fun and in control. It took a few years to become addicted for her, but it happened none the less. Addiction to gambling is

very real and this is why it's so dangerous to bring to Alaska.

Once she was addicted, she had to gamble and get the money anyway she could. I asked her, "what made it so addicting?"

She replied, "it was always bright and friendly, good food, free drinks, great service, driven to get back the money lost from the last gambling experience, and to basically get away from the world."

My mom and step dad exhausted the payday loan stores, wrote bad checks and eventually towards the end, stole from their job.

I was visiting my sister when we got the call from my mom. Her boss found out about the theft, my mom was terminated and evicted from where she was living. She was also facing possible jail time. Everyone including us who love my parents had to scramble to raise money to quickly pay her boss to keep her out of jail. We had to get her stuff and get her out that day from where she lived. It was horrible. Here my mom at 48 yrs. old was losing everything she had worked for because of a gambling addiction. That was just the beginning. They had to pay back the payday loan stores, the banks, the casinos and all the people that loaned them money. The total bill was \$27,000. They couldn't find work so they had to settle for odd jobs and sometimes working in

dangerous conditions or areas. They stayed at weekly motels and lived on McDonald's dollar meals. Every day was a complete struggle. Every minute of every day to rebuild their life. They finally filed bankruptcy, but they have to pay that back as well.

All this took place about 3 yrs. ago and they are still rebuilding from it all. The good news is that my mom is totally free from gambling addiction. She wanted me to write this to you because she didn't want anyone else to go through what she's been through.

During her gambling experiences she met many other people who also were addicted to gambling and so my mom shared with me some of the effects and tragedies of their lives. Here is a list of what she saw:

1. Children pay the highest price. Many times people divorce because of gambling or they leave for days at a time leaving the children to fend for themselves or with a caretaker who is not very responsible. The children are vulnerable to molesting, rape, abuse, poor eating habits, poor school grades or no attendance at all, kidnapping and sometimes even death. The parents simply aren't there to protect and take care of them.
2. Divorce is really common with gamblers. If a spouse becomes addicted, they may and many times do drain the savings account, and also

sometimes bounce checks or they're late on paying bills, mortgage or rent. It's very stressful on marriage to say the least.

3. My mom met people who were stealing to gamble occasionally. But what's really sad is when she met a small business owner who had to close up his business because of addicted gamblers who stole thousands from him.
4. Bankruptcy increases and that's hard on the public as a whole.

Final Statement

I have done my own research regarding gambling and it's a known fact that anyone who already has an addiction problem or has relatives with addictions is more likely to become addicted to gambling. In my love for Alaska I feel compelled to mention that Alaska has one of the highest drinking and drug addiction problems in the U.S. from what I've heard and read. Which, if this is true, means if gambling were introduced to Alaska, it could be devastating. If you also include long, dark, winters and the depression problems, I can't even imagine what would happen 10-20 yrs. down the road. If a casino were to open please consider the following:

1. Increase funding to Child Protective Services programs and foster homes because the children will need you to help them.

2. Provide marriage counseling and addiction counseling programs for free to the public.

Again I thank you so much for your time.

May God bless you with His wisdom.

Pamela Samash

Chris Birdsall

From: Guy & Peg Warren [jnuwarrens@gci.net]
Sent: Wednesday, February 06, 2008 10:58 AM
To: Chris Birdsall
Subject: Presbytery of Alaska on HJR 2 -- For Profit Gambling Amendment

I am sorry but due to other obligations I am unavailable to attend the hearing on HJR 2 this afternoon.

However, on behalf of the Presbytery of Alaska I would note that we have always opposed increased gambling within Alaska, and would support any effort to ensure that such increases do not occur.

We particularly appreciate that this proposal, if approved by the legislature and adopted by the people, would permit the entire state to be a direct party to the decision making process of enhanced gambling.

We understand that some communities may believe that permitting gambling within their bounds may provide benefit to them, but we believe that even if that is the case, that doing this will provide greater costs, both financial and social to the state as a whole. It is only just and proper therefore to allow the whole state to have a voice in that decision.

I thank the Committee for their consideration of this matter, and thank the sponsors for bringing this bill forward.

Guy Warren
Stated Clerk
Presbytery of Alaska