

# CHURCH CONNECTION

MARCH 2023



## GAMBLING: WILL WE LEARN FROM OUR HISTORY?

March is National Problem Gambling Awareness Month. In 1996 less than 1% of Wisconsin citizens, or about 32,425 residents were problem gamblers. The social costs related to those problem gamblers was over \$300 million, or \$9,469 per problem gambler. Those numbers clearly should have told us something. But sadly we failed to learn from our history.

In 2022, approximately 7% of Wisconsin's adult population, or over 333,000 people, identified as problem gamblers, which means, even using the out-dated 1996 per-gambler cost, Wisconsin society now pays over \$3 billion in social costs related to the consequences of problem gambling. Again, those numbers clearly tell us something.

What has driven this drastic increase in the number of problem gamblers in Wisconsin? Certainly, the lottery is one driver with its unconstitutional, ubiquitous, and slick advertising, which focuses on zip codes where high percentages of the population are in poverty. Another is undoubtedly more casinos and now sports betting.

In 1991 and 1992, Governor Tommy Thompson signed 11 tribal compacts. With that signing Indian gaming casinos began operating in Wisconsin. In those days, the number of games was restricted, as were the hours of operation. Compacts were reviewed, renegotiated, and re-signed on a regular basis.

That all changed when Governor Doyle dramatically increased the number of games casinos could offer, expanded the hours of operation, and arranged that the compacts never again had to be renegotiated. As of 2016, 11 tribes operated 24 casinos, with 15,402 gaming devices and 294 gaming tables. The tribes' net revenue since 1992 is over \$21 billion.

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### Mark Your Calendar!

#### April 4, Spring non-partisan general election

We will be electing a state supreme court justice for a 10-year term, as well as school board members, mayors and other local officials. This is a critically important election, and we encourage everyone to be a good steward of your citizenship by casting an informed vote.

For information on the SC candidates, visit [ivoterguide.com](http://ivoterguide.com) or visit [wifamilycouncil.org/election-resources](http://wifamilycouncil.org/election-resources).

STRENGTHENING,  
PRESERVING & PROMOTING  
MARRIAGE, FAMILY, LIFE &  
RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

*"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"*

Matt. 16:26

The bottom line on the compacts that govern the state's relationship with the tribes and their casinos is that the governor has virtual sole discretion in any new deals with the tribes. Recently, three tribes were allowed to offer sports betting on casino property—which basically means we now have online sports betting. Since what one tribe gets they all get, it won't be long before the other eight tribes have sports betting. This represents a massive expansion of gambling in Wisconsin. With it will come more problem gamblers.



In addition to this gambling expansion, Governor Evers has also approved the first off-reservation casino in the state. Beloit is the unlucky community for this family-harming, local-business-destroying enterprise. Rest assured this won't be the last off-reservation casino.

When it comes to problem gamblers, studies have shown that having a casino within 10 to 50 miles of a person's home significantly increases the likelihood of a person becoming a problem gambler. For many people gambling isn't harmless entertainment; it is a powerful addiction, impacting families and entire communities. It stresses marriages, results in crime, especially embezzling, creates poverty for families, and often causes depression leading to suicide. Problem gambling comes with a steep price tag for everyone who lives in a state where gambling is readily available.

Problem Gambling Awareness Month is a good time for all Wisconsinites to learn from our history. Gambling is a bad bet.

## WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

For some, because there is no express prohibition in Scripture against gambling that means it is at least allowable. However, this fails to carefully consider the implications of a number of passages. We are commanded to work with our own hands to meet our needs and the needs of others (Eph. 4:28). We are also expected to invest wisely (Cf. Mat. 25:14ff). Surely no one seriously thinks or believes that gambling is comparable to investing. For someone to win at gambling means that others must lose. That fact violates the command to love our neighbors as ourselves (Mat. 22:37-40 & James 2:8). In the final analysis, gambling inevitably revolves around the love of money, and we are told clearly that money-love is a root of all kinds of evil (I Tim. 6:6, 9-10). Gambling is very poor stewardship of what God enables us to earn. It promotes and regularly leads to illegal activity, addiction, neglect and destruction of marriages and family, and a host of other social ills. Love of neighbor and love of what is right means Christians should not engage in this activity, nor condone its expansion and promotion.

Wisconsin Family Council (WFC) is a 501 (c)(3) organization that has been advancing Judeo-Christian principles and values in Wisconsin since 1986. We have largely done this by informing Wisconsin citizens, policymakers, and churches about the important legislative and cultural issues so they can be involved in strengthening, preserving, and promoting God's plan for marriage and family, the sanctity of human life, and religious freedom in our state.

"Church Connection" is published monthly by WFC and is available to churches in Wisconsin.

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