



## NATIONAL GAMBLING IMPACT STUDY COMMISSION

800 North Capitol Street, N.W., Suite 450, Washington, D.C. 20002

Tel: 202-523-8217; Fax: 202-523-4394

June 18, 1999

TO THE PRESIDENT, CONGRESS, GOVERNORS, AND TRIBAL LEADERS:

At the inaugural meeting of this Commission two years ago, I stated that we had been charged by Congress with “a very broad and very difficult task – to conduct a comprehensive legal and factual study of the social and economic implications of gambling in the United States.” We have now completed that task. This Report presents the principal findings of that effort and the recommendations we believe provide a coherent framework for action.

The Commission devoted considerable attention and resources to discharging its responsibilities, efforts which included holding a series of hearings around the country in which the Commission and its Subcommittees received testimony from hundreds of experts and members of the public; making several site visits; commissioning original research; conducting surveys of the existing, wide-ranging literature; and soliciting and receiving input from a broad array of individuals and organizations.

Despite these extensive efforts, we have not exhausted the topic: the subject of gambling’s impact is too extensive to be fully captured in a single volume. Through our contracted research, we have added important new information in several fields; but the need for additional research remains. In fact, one of our most important conclusions is that far more data is needed in virtually every area. But even though the need for additional information cannot be contested, this cannot be allowed to become an excuse for inaction. It is likely that necessary information will always be in short supply and insufficient to compel agreement on controversial issues or to lay out a road map for the future. However, it is our belief that we have substantially reduced the uncertainties that are an inevitable part of that process.

Two years ago, I also stated that this Commission had a diverse make-up, representing broad differences of opinion, and that I expected that diversity to be fully and forcefully voiced. I believe anyone who has been present at any of our proceedings will acknowledge that that was an accurate forecast. That diversity did not necessarily make for quick decisions or easy consensus, but it did ensure a healthy representation of a wide range of interests and perspectives. One need not claim perfection for the process to understand that this approach is the foundation of representative democracy.

In the end, however, the unanimous adoption of this Report speaks for itself. That is not to say that every Commissioner has agreed with every point or recommendation. Even in areas of agreement, each Commissioner brought to our work his own point of view, some of which is reflected in the individual statements appended to this Report. But the determination of the Commissioners to search for common ground without sacrificing a vigorous advocacy of their perspective is a testament to their dedication to public service.


This is the Report of a national Commission to the President, Congress, State Governors, and Tribal Leaders. But although the growth of gambling is a national phenomenon, gambling itself is of greatest concern to the individual communities in which it operates or is proposed to operate. It is at that level that its impact is felt most keenly and where the debates surrounding this issue are most energetically contested. Those communities form no common front: one community may welcome gambling as an economic salvation, while its neighbor may regard it as anathema. As such, there are few areas in which a single national, one-size-fits-all approach can be recommended.

Thus, with only a few exceptions in areas such as the Internet, we agree that gambling is not a subject to be settled at the national level, but is more appropriately addressed at the state, tribal, and local levels. It is our hope that this Report will help spark a review and assessment of gambling in those same communities and jurisdictions. For that reason, we have recommended a pause in the expansion of gambling in order to allow time for an assessment of the costs and benefits already visible, as well as those which remain to be identified. The only certainty regarding these reviews is that any results will be as individual as the communities undertaking them: some will decide to curtail the gambling they already have, others may wish to remove existing restraints. Still others may conclude that their situation requires no change. What is most important, however, is that these reviews take place and that whatever decisions are made are informed ones.

The recommendations in this Report are not self-enacting. In the end, the usefulness of the Commission's work can only be measured by the actions of others, be they in government or in the private sector. Regardless of whether or not their actions draw directly upon the recommendations in this Report or are the result of other efforts that this Commission may help prompt, it is our hope that those who bear the responsibility for protecting and promoting the public's welfare will find this Report useful toward that end. That alone would be sufficient reward for our efforts.

I want to express my deep appreciation to the members of this Commission for their perspective, sacrifice, and commitment to a fair, balanced, and objective analysis of the issue. Our ability to come together with a unanimous Report is indicative of their diligence, as well as the outstanding support provided by the Commission's staff.

On behalf of my fellow Commissioners, thank you for the opportunity to serve the American people.



Kay C. James  
Chairman



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

### COMMISSIONERS

**Kay C. James, Chairman**

**William A. Bible  
Dr. James C. Dobson  
J. Terrence Lanni  
Richard C. Leone**

**Robert W. Loescher  
Leo T. McCarthy  
Dr. Paul H. Moore  
John W. Wilhelm**

*The Commission recognizes and appreciates the efforts made in the last two years by those who have served the public and the Commission as staff. Through their support and hard work, Commissioners were able to achieve the mandate set forth by the United States Congress.*

### CURRENT COMMISSION STAFF

**Timothy Kelly, Ph.D., Executive Director**

**Doug Seay, Deputy Executive Director**

**Mark Bogdan  
Deborah DuCre'  
Dawn Hively  
Janet Newkirk**

**Valerie Rice  
Katherine Spilde, Ph.D.  
Craig Stevens**

### FORMER COMMISSION STAFF

**Timothy Bidwill, J.D.  
Allison Flatt, J.D.  
Nancy Mohr Kennedy  
Amy Ricketts  
Martha Roberts**

**John Shosky, Ph.D.  
Carol Simpson, J.D.  
Stephen Watters  
Stephen White, J.D.**

### RESEARCH INTERNS

**Carlos Armintor  
Maria Giordano  
Erik Heckman  
Daniel Hughes  
Jennifer Johnson  
S. Ryan Meyer**

**Kathleen O'Keefe  
Sohee Park  
Raluca Popovici  
Asli Robolok  
Jason Specht**