

**STATEMENT ON  
COMMERCIAL GAMBLING  
BY THE  
CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF LOUISIANA  
2008**

We, the Catholic Bishops of Louisiana, have repeatedly opposed the proliferation of legalized commercial gambling. In 1986, 1992, and 1996 we voiced strong opposition because of the inevitable, moral consequences for individuals, families and community which result from easy access to gambling, such as casinos and electronic gaming machines. Although the Louisiana Legislature did not adopt legislation in 1996 that would automatically eliminate or curtail commercial gambling, it did pass legislation that enables us as citizens to determine whether we want this type of business in our own communities.

Our opposition to commercial gambling is clear. Some people wonder whether we are consistent when we tolerate church-based games of chance. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* helps us to highlight the difference: "Games of chance (card games, etc.) or wagers are not themselves contrary to justice. They become morally unacceptable when they deprive someone of what is necessary to provide for his needs and those of others. The passion of gambling risks becoming an enslavement ....." Thus, *recreational games of chance* which provide social entertainment as well as fund raising for charitable and educational purposes are morally acceptable when practiced in moderation.

The Catholic Bishops of Louisiana have repeatedly stated the difficulty with commercial gambling: "We fear casino gambling will have a particularly detrimental effect on family life which has already suffered severely from other factors in our society. The financial benefits in terms of tax revenues from casino gambling also must be weighed against other factors. These factors include the financial drain on families and the community, the erosion of industriousness, and responsibility of individuals." A report to the Legislature by the Louisiana Compulsive Gambling Study Committee validated our concern. More than 150,000 of our citizens had gambling problems and more than 50,000 were "pathological gamblers." Results such as these must certainly involve personal tragedy and the disruption of family life. Moreover, past exposés provide ample evidence that electronic gaming opens the door to the corruption of our public officials. Commercial gambling also makes us vulnerable to organized crime.

As Bishops, therefore, we reiterate our support and endorsement to any proposal which would effect the elimination or curtailment of gambling in the form of casinos and electronic gaming machines.

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