

WORD FROM WASHINGTON



Fighting Problem Gambling



(NAPSA)—A bill in Washington could help countless Americans work to break what can be a costly and destructive addiction—an addiction to gambling.

Problem gambling is gambling behavior that causes disruptions in any major area of life, ranging from relationships with friends and family, to job performance and even physical and psychological health.

It's a progressive addiction characterized by increasing preoccupation with gambling, as well as a need to bet more money more frequently. Problem gamblers often feel restless or irritable when they attempt to stop gambling, and their tendency to "chase" losses can lead to a loss of control as their behavior continues in spite of mounting, serious, negative consequences.

The bill, called the Comprehensive Problem Gambling Act (CPG), is supported by the National Council on Problem Gambling. It seeks to provide the first-ever federal funding for prevention and treatment of problem gamblers. The council—which cautions that anyone can develop a gambling addiction—says the legislation will create a much-needed safety net across the country.

Gambling participation is said to be at an all-time high in the U.S., with 80 percent of Americans

Americans can speak out on a bill to help treat and prevent gambling addiction.

thought to have gambled at least once. That number might increase further as many states expand their legalized gambling laws in an effort to increase revenue and remedy growing deficits. In fact, Congress is considering a bill to legalize online poker, a move the council says could even further increase the number of gamblers in America.

According to the council, 25 percent of Americans know someone with a gambling problem, and the costs of those problems stem beyond that particular person's life. The group says the social price of gambling addiction alone is nearly \$6 billion. These costs are often passed on to individuals, families and communities in the form of higher criminal justice, unemployment and hospital spending, according to the council.

You can learn more by visiting www.ncpgambling.org or calling (202) 547-9204. The confidential national problem gambling hotline is (800) 522-4700.

To voice your opinion on the problem gambling bill in Washington, visit www.house.gov or www.senate.gov for information on contacting representatives. You can also call (202) 224-3121.