



August 24, 2007

Dear Church Leader,

Greetings from Focus on the Family! As you may already know, Miami-Dade County voters will decide—during the primary elections on Tuesday, January 29, 2008—whether to forbid or tolerate Vegas-style slot-machine casinos at the county's three pari-mutuel racetracks (creating casinos or "racinos").

A diverse coalition of pro-family groups, such as the ***Christian Coalition of South Florida, the Florida Family Policy Council and Focus on the Family*** are urging Miami-Dade residents to vote against gambling expansion in the primary election. Addiction, bankruptcy, crime, divorce and ruined families often follow in the wake of gambling expansion. Another group of citizens, ***GREY2K USA***, is opposing the racetrack-casino measure based on the pari-mutuel industry's inhumane treatment of greyhounds and horses.

The pari-mutuel industry has been declining since its peak in 1992—revenues have dropped nearly 50 percent according to the *Greyhound Racing Association of America*. Most tracks that remain operational rely on the addition of highly addictive video slot machines (and their subsequent revenue). The racing industry is unable to sustain itself without adding casinos. The National Gambling Impact Study Commission's Final Report strongly opposed this track-to-casino trend in Recommendation 3.12:

*"The Commission recommends that states should refuse to allow the introduction of casino-style gambling into pari-mutuel facilities for the primary purpose of saving a pari-mutuel facility that the market has determined no longer serves the community or for the purpose of competing with other forms of gambling."*  
[Emphasis added]

We urge all concerned citizens in Miami-Dade County to oppose any attempts by the gambling interests to expand gambling in Florida. Pari-mutuel racing is a former generation's gamble. These facilities should be converted into something that benefits Florida citizens, not operations that deceive, exploit and fleece people for monetary gain.

Gambling undermines the American work ethic and entices those in desperate financial situations to seek relief through chance. Gambling is based on the premise of getting something for nothing, a concept that sanctions idleness rather than industriousness, slothfulness instead of initiative. In the worst circumstances, gambling addicts resort to crime to finance their addictions. For instance, the number of court cases filed in Tunica County, Mississippi, increased

from 689 the year before local casinos began operating to 11,100 five years after their introduction. Gambling is exploitation, not entertainment.

Equally disturbing, gambling addiction tears families apart. The National Gambling Impact Study Commission documented that the incidence of divorce, suicide, bankruptcy and child and spousal abuse for gamblers is measurably higher than it is among non-gamblers. Thus, the extent of harm even carries over to members of a community who do not participate directly in gambling.

We're asking Florida churches to urge their congregants to **vote "No"** on the January 29 ballot issue that expands gambling. Because these are nonpartisan ballot issues that do not involve candidates, churches are well within their legal [501(c)(3)] parameters to take a stand against gambling. For more information about gambling's impact on families, visit [www.citizenlink.org/FOSI/gambling/](http://www.citizenlink.org/FOSI/gambling/). For more information on your legal rights to speak out on moral or ethical issues within the church and from the pulpit, visit the *Biblical Perspectives on Gambling* section of the above Web site.

Become a local activist by contacting the *Florida Family Policy Council* and the *Christian Coalition of South Florida*. Get involved and fight gambling expansion in Miami-Dade County.  
***Christian Coalition of South Florida*** - (305)-663-4454 - [www.ccsfla.org](http://www.ccsfla.org)  
***Florida Family Policy Council*** - (407) 251-5130 - [www.FloridaFamilyAction.org](http://www.FloridaFamilyAction.org)

I pray that you and your congregants will consider actively opposing gambling expansion. Thank you in advance for your help in defeating this ballot measure to safeguard Florida families and communities.

Sincerely,

Chad Hills

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chad Hills", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Analyst for Gambling Research & Policy  
Focus on the Family Action  
8605 Explorer Drive  
Colorado Springs, CO 80920