A Bet Against Internet Gambling Essay, Research Paper

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I love gambling. Who doesn’t? The minute you walk into a casino you are overwhelmed by exciting noises, flashing lights and people having a good time. There is so much excitement it isn’t hard to become addicted, especially after your first big win. The rush you get from winning is something that is hard to parallel. Trust me I know. I almost became addicted. I realized the trouble I was heading for before it was too late. I was a lucky one. Many people aren’t as lucky. It is especially easy for people who live very close to a casino to get addicted because it is so easily accessible. Now imagine if everyone who had a computer had 600+ casino’s right in their own living room. It is like everyone having access to crack cocaine all the time. Not quite as addictive, but you get the idea. That is why I am for Internet gambling prohibition.

Some people might say that prohibition isn’t fair, that there are people who can handle the responsibility. Why should everyone suffer because some people can’t handle it? I would tell them that in making a decision like whether or not Internet gambling prohibition should be enforced the benefits should outweigh the risks. In this case they definitely do.

Internet gambling is easy to get hooked on. There are advertisements for casinos at almost all of the major search engines and home pages (ex: yahoo, metacrawler, excite etc.). Many of these advertisements claim that they have free gambling or give away free money. For example one casino will give you $125.00 for a $50.00 deposit. Do you think they would really give you that money if they weren’t confident that you would get hooked and spend it all there or if they thought that they wouldn’t get it all back? Once they have lured you to their websites it is easy for them to get your money. It seems a lot easier to spend virtual casino tokens purchased with a credit card than it is to spend your actual hard earned cash at a real casino.

Another obvious problem with having online casinos is that children have easy access to them. There is no way to check ID. Anyone with a credit card number can play. Parents of children who gamble online are legally responsible for the debt that their children accumulate. It is especially easy if the parents have already been to that particular casino and set up an account. All the child would need is a password and many computer operating systems have the option of saving passwords and filling them in for the user.

Young people are especially vulnerable to Internet gambling. “In virtually all studies of the rates of gambling problems at various ages, high school and college-aged individuals show the highest problem rates,” said an advisory on Internet gambling and addiction issued by the American Psychiatric Association (Gugliotta 1).

Some people believe that online casinos are good for the local economy because they provide jobs and tax revenue for a community. This may be true but the community isn’t local. Most online casinos are located overseas to avoid taxes and US regulations.

Another reason for prohibition is that there is no way to regulate online overseas casinos. Real casinos in the United States are strictly monitored for fairness and must pay out certain a certain percentage. A large percentage of online casinos are not physically located in the U.S. (de Bendern 1). Even if their government monitored these casinos would we want another country dictating what is fair for our gamblers?

Online casinos aren’t the only way of gambling online. There are also cyber bookies for sports betting and so-called “free” lotteries.

National sports leagues are against online betting for two good reasons. “When people are putting money down on games, it does enhance the possibility of actual corruption,” says David Remes, an attorney for the NFL. “It also sends a terrible message to young people and children about what these competitions are about.”

The “free” lotteries aren’t quite as harmful as the other forms of online gambling but they definitely aren’t free. They don’t cost money to play but you must sacrifice your privacy. These websites generate revenue by selling the personal information that you are forced to supply in order to play. Some of the information that you must supply is your name, address, phone number or even household income. I don’t think allowing online gambling to be legal is worth the dangers involved. I am betting that Internet Gambling Prohibition is the right way to go. People who love to gamble will always be able to travel to Las Vegas or their local Indian reservation, but there is no need to put children and families at risk by making gambling too easily accessible.

Bibliography

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Annotated

De Bendern, Paul. “Stacking the Deck: Online Casinos Are Global Phenomenon.” abcNEWS.com 09

Mar. 2000

Online gambling is growing world-wide. Paul de Bendern lists the following statistics; “In 1997 there were 40 gambling Web sites. Now an estimated 650 e-gaming Web sites have sprung up globally, many in the Caribbean and Canada.”

Gugliotta, Guy. “Young Gamblers Flocking to the Internet: As Sites Proliferate, the First Online

Generation Grows Vulnerable to Addiction.” The Washington Post Online 26 Jan. 2001.

The rapid growth of Internet sites dedicated to gambling has made wagering much more accessible than it ever was. As a result, more people are prone to getting into debt through gambling, and even becoming gambling addicts. Gugliotta says that young people may be at the highest risk. “In virtually all studies of the rates of gambling problems at various ages, high school and college-aged individuals show the highest problem rates.”

Ito, Tim and Staples, Sharisa. “Overview: The Odds on Prohibiting Web Bets” The Washington Post Online Jun. 1999.

In 1999 the national Gambling Impact Study Commission released its recommendation that gambling via the Internet be prohibited in the U.S., however most companies that operate gambling sites are located offshore. Ito and Staples state the problem this way, “Changes in law follow changes in society, but our society has been changing so rapidly, sometimes the law cannot keep up.”

Reiter, Luke and Wellen, Alex. “Viva Virtual Vegas” TechTV Online

There are many reasons why gambling via the Internet should be prohibited. One outstanding reason is that there is no good way to regulate Internet gambling. Reiter and Wellen state the following: “How can we be sure that a casino from a foreign country will actually send US bettors their winnings? How can we be sure that foreign casinos are not doctoring the odds or manipulating outcomes?”

Wasserman, Elizabeth. “Analysis: Should the U.S. regulate or ban online gambling?” CNN.com 14 Aug. 2000

Many people are supportive of Internet gambling prohibition, however they are worried about how the prohibition would be enforced if it were passed. Wasserman admits that the law would be hard to enforce. “We don’t know how to control the flow of drugs into this country, either,” she says. “But that doesn’t make it legal.”