



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

Addabbo Supports Raising Legal Age for Gambling in State to 21

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR. January 23, 2012

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Pitfalls of Gambling Among Youth Cited

Queens, NY, January 23, 2012 -- At the start of the legislative session, **NYS Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr.** (D-Queens) reports to his constituents the need to raise the minimum age to gamble at a state's casino to 21. Now that Governor Cuomo has initiated the legislative process and the wheels of Albany are turning toward legalizing full casino gaming in New York, the senator believes that now is also the time to address this important issue. The senator wants to raise awareness of the pitfalls of gambling and promote legislative support in Albany for raising the age to legally gamble at a state's casino to 21 from 18, the current legal age in New York State.

"I believe the time is right to address the issues of gambling through raising awareness and legislation," Addabbo stated. He has met with a number of individuals who represent organizations that have programs that attend to social problems associated with all types of gambling. This past week, Addabbo discussed the issue with personnel from Genting New York, operators of the Resorts World Casino at Aqueduct, and was informed that it has an internal program for its employees and displays information on the issue for its customers throughout the casino.

"Our economy hinges on winning the future. For America to own this century, we must provide our younger residents with the conditions to excel academically and professionally in order to create the next Google or to invent the next critical piece of technology that revolutionizes the way people live. To do this, young people must have the opportunity to study in advanced fields of science and mathematics. With college costs continuing to grow, it is vital to provide a firm financial foundation for scholars to become the next entrepreneurs," the senator said. He believes that part of achieving this goal is to remove those impediments that may distract from, or curb, success. That is partly why Addabbo supports making the gambling age 21. While gambling provides the allure of easy riches, the reality is that high school- and college-aged individuals are more likely to develop a pathological obsession with gambling similar to alcohol abuse. According to a study published a few years ago by the Council on Alcoholism and Addictions of the Finger Lakes, *Raising the Gambling Age to 21 in New York State*, the earlier in life when a person begins gambling, the

more likely it is that they will experience symptoms that correlate with pathological gambling. Research has shown that gambling at a young age is a trigger for alcohol abuse, drug use and criminal behavior later in life. Moreover, youngsters are more inclined to gamble than older individuals, in games such as cards, dice, and pool. According to Youth Gambling International, young adults ages 18-21 are three times more likely to have problems associated with gambling. Addiction professionals point to delaying the exposure of young people to problems as a means of prevention. Making the gambling age 21 would ensure that there is a smaller likelihood that the youth in the state develop gambling addictions.

The prospect of thousands of young gambling addicts would place undue burdens on families and friends at a time when New Yorkers are recovering from a harsh recession and need to be investing wisely and preparing for the future. It would also place unnecessary financial burdens on the state, which is obligated to aid citizens in need. If raising the minimum age to gamble is not realized, New York will be one of only six states that allow statewide gambling of all kinds and in all places at the age of 18.

The years between ages 18-21 are also the defining years of a young adult's life. These are the years which will determine the kind of person they will become. It is a time when lifelong friends are made and an individual discovers who they are. It is reckless and irresponsible to place this personal discovery in jeopardy by luring young adults into gambling away their mental and financial well-being with a hope of easy riches.

It has been reported that the dangerous side effects of gambling addiction are not limited to the young. Seniors can also become pathological gamblers. Many seniors gamble as a means of passing the time or to increase their fixed incomes—but they may become addicted. Be on the lookout for warning signs that you or a loved one may have a gambling addiction, such as mood swings, decreased appetite or gambling with money designated for necessary expenses such as groceries or medications.

“Our state's Constitution must be amended over two consecutive legislative sessions and then a deciding vote, via the people's vote on a referendum ballot, must also provide public assent before full casino gaming can operate in the state. Since we have a few years before that is likely to happen, it gives us enough time to be more responsible by raising awareness to avoid youthful gambling addictions. I will continue to meet with all interested parties to address this serious issue,” Addabbo concluded.

For more information on the social issues related to gambling, please call Senator Addabbo at his district offices: 718-738-1111 (Howard Beach) or 718-497-1630 (Middle Village).

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