



DAN FLYNN

★DISTRICT 2★

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Contact: David Erinakes
Phone: (512) 463-0880

Considering ALL Costs When It Comes To Gambling In Texas

AUSTIN, TEXAS - A recent survey done by Baseline and Associates suggested a large majority of Texas voters (64%) favor the specific proposal of allowing slot machines at Texas race tracks and on Indian reservations. The questions seem to be quite leading and in any instance do not seem to reflect the will of the many voters I have heard from on in this matter. This is important because too often decisions are made with deficient and incomplete information. It has however fueled debate among Legislators in the state who have already started the debate over whether to bring slot machines to state race tracks.

Texas and Texas lawmakers have been divided on the gambling expansion issue over the past couple of years, but the cuts in budget expenditures have brought the issue forward and could push for a vote on expansion of gambling during this session. Traditionally, Texas has been and will continue to be a conservative state. So even though gambling has become widespread around the US, Texas has resisted any of the short term fixes and avoided any expansion of gambling including slot machines for their race tracks in the past. However, with many programs being cut including education and tracks experiencing financial disaster like never before,

track owners need the states help to stay afloat and plan to do so by suggesting a 'limited' approach. Many feel this is an effort to push a backdoor approach by allowing slot machines at racetracks on a "limited" basis.

Gambling even in this 'limited' manner is still gambling and surprisingly we have seen little or no discussion of the social costs involved in allowing gambling to expand within the state. While many works of research suggest a wide range of associated social costs, many have suggested a \$3 cost to every \$1 in revenue made for the state in terms of welfare and medical support to the gambler and the ancillary costs to families. I would have to reiterate that I do stand opposed to the spread of gambling as a socially dangerous activity. To those who say that gambling will be a financial salvation for the state, I ask that they think long and hard about the social costs and how they may be asked to pay for those costs down the road. Interesting to note is the number of states that do allow gambling that are in desperate financial shape. I also ask them to remember the promises made when the Texas Lottery was launched and ask the question, "If that lottery was such a good deal, why is education funding having to be cut?"

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