

December 18, 2002

**STATEMENT OF MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL
THE NATIONAL BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION
THE NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE
THE NATIONAL HOCKEY LEAGUE**

**OPPOSING STATE-SPONSORED SPORTS GAMBLING
IN DELAWARE**

The four professional sports leagues oppose state-sponsored sports gambling in Delaware or any other state. We understand that Delaware is facing financial difficulties and needs to consider all possible sources of revenue. But we must oppose solutions that involve sports gambling.

Simply put, we do not want our games used as bait to sell gambling. We do not want our athletes used as roulette chips. We do not want the spread of illegal sports gambling and corruption that legalized sports gambling will bring. And we do not want any state, by promoting sports gambling, to send our children the harmful message that sports gambling is legitimate -- indeed, something the state encourages and rewards. We do not want any state to teach our children to gamble on their heroes.

Make no mistake. Gambling is what this is about. Not gaming, not a lottery. Gambling. One has only to recall the games offered by the Delaware Lottery Office in 1976 -- old-fashioned sports pools, in which participants could win by correctly selecting winning teams and point spreads, with prize amounts determined on a parimutuel basis. The only difference between those games and games offered in Las Vegas was that the state, rather than a private casino, was the house. According to newspaper reports at the time, the reason the state's experiment with sports gambling failed in 1976 is that professional gamblers loved the state's odds and flocked to play the games.

No state should place its stamp of approval on sports gambling. Sports gambling threatens the character of team sports. Our sports embody our very finest traditions and values. They stand for clean, healthy competition. They stand for teamwork, And they stand for success through preparation and honest effort. With legalized sports gambling, our games would instead represent the fast buck, the quick fix, the desire to get something for nothing. Legalized sports gambling would change -- for the worse -- what our games stand for and the way they are perceived, and magnify the ever present risks of corruption and scandal. The inevitable questions that will arise about the integrity of our games -- questions that will arise in the minds of losing bettors, as well as the public at large -- will undermine the public confidence that is absolutely essential to our future operations. We want fans to root for their home team to win, not to beat the spread; we likewise want our athletes to know they are being cheered to win.

Legalized sports gambling sends a terrible message to youth. Sports are important to millions of our young people. Youth look up to athletes. Our players cannot be expected to serve as healthy role models for youth if they are made to function as participants in gambling enterprises. And legalized sports gambling sends a regrettable message to our young people that anything goes when it comes to raising revenues or protecting local interests, and that we might as well legalize, sponsor, and promote any activity so that the state can get its cut. This is a message we can ill afford to send, especially in a time of political disaffection among youth.

Finally, and perhaps worst of all, legalized sports gambling would mean more sports gambling -- among adults and young people alike. As Senator Bill Bradley stated a decade ago in opposing similar proposals, legalized gambling does not replace illegal

gambling -- it only adds to it. Experts have long linked the rise in teenage gambling to the spread of state lotteries generally. As Dr. Valerie Lorenz of the National Center for Pathological Gambling stated a decade ago: The message they're conveying is that gambling is not a vice but a normal form of entertainment. That message would certainly be sent by a state lottery based on team sports. And, as Dr. Lorenz has written, a sports lottery not only teaches youngsters how to bet on football pools, but also encourages them to do so. The National Gambling Impact Study Commission, in its 1999 Final Report, more recently documented the harms caused by sports gambling.

For all of these reasons, Congress ten years ago enacted federal legislation prohibiting states from legalizing sports gambling, citing the harms identified above. Political realities, however, prevented Congress from prohibiting private sports gambling operations where they were already legal, as in Nevada, or sports lotteries already authorized by state law. The result was a grandfather provision in the federal statute that left future decisions with respect to sports lottery games up to Delaware within the authority preserved by that provision. But the fact that federal law leaves Delaware an option of instituting sports lottery games again does not mean that it should do so. For all of the reasons that led Congress to prohibit legalization of sports gambling, Delaware should not do so.

For all of these reasons, the four professional sports leagues oppose state-sponsored sports gambling in Delaware or any other state.