

Statement by Greg Smith, Executive Director of the
Alliance Against Sports Gambling in Delaware to the
Study Committee on Sports Gaming: April 15, 2003

Good Morning:

My name is Greg Smith and I am the Executive Director of the Alliance Against Sports Gambling in Delaware. The alliance represents a broad coalition of groups and individuals who share a commitment to oppose any increase in gambling that would include betting on sports.

Members of this growing alliance represent constituents from all walks of life, from Bishops of the Catholic and Methodist Churches in Delaware to coaches, former athletes, and educators.

Member reasons range from concern over the integrity of sports to the potential impact on children to opposing gambling increases in general to doubts about the revenue potential of any sports lottery (or all of the above.)

We want to make sure as you study this issue that you remain aware of the strong opposition to the idea of legalized sports gambling not only among the members of our alliance, but among the general population as well. A recent poll last month found that nearly two thirds of the people surveyed did not support legalizing any form of sports betting in our state.

Thank you for your time today

Current members of the Alliance:

- Bishop Peter Weaver (Methodist Church)
- Bishop Michael Saltarelli (Catholic Diocese of Wilmington)
- Reverend Robert Hall (Executive Director, Delaware Ecumenical Council of Children and Families)
- Coach Tubby Raymond (University of Delaware football coach: 1966-2001)
- Quarterback Rich Gannon (NFL – 2002 MVP & Former University of Delaware star)
- Ruly Carpenter (Former owner of the Philadelphia Phillies)
- Mike Graves (President, Delaware YMCA)
- William DeLauder (President, Delaware State University)
- Dale Wolf (Former Lieutenant Governor and Governor of DE)
- Val Whiting-Raymond (WNBA player for the Minnesota Lynx and Seattle Reign and Ursuline Academy)
- Theopolis Gregory (Former University of Delaware player and Wilmington City Councilman, At Large)
- Vincent J. Poppiti (Former Chief Judge, Delaware Family Court)
- Bruce Reynolds (State Representative and High School Coach)
- Dallas Green (Former Phillies player and manager)
- Kevin Reilly (Former linebacker for the Eagles)



**PUBLIC OPINION
STRATEGIES**

Turning Questions into Answers

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. *Voters do hold favorable views of already existing legalized forms of betting in the state.*

Voters view favorably the three forms of legalized gaming in the state that currently exist – 82% favor the state lottery, 68% favor betting on horse racing, and 67% favor slot machines at horse racing tracks. Overall, six in ten voters (61%) favor all three types of gambling.

- That said, there is also a solid core of gambling opponents – one quarter of the electorate (24%) staunchly opposes gambling and consider it morally wrong.

2. *But there is no appetite for expanding betting to include betting on sports.*

Only 36% of voters favor expanding the Delaware Lottery to offer betting on professional sports at horse racing tracks, while 62% are opposed. Intensity on the opposition side is very high at 45% strongly opposed.

We used a split sampling technique to identify any differences in using the terms “gambling” or “betting” to describe the proposal. What we found is that no matter how the proposal is couched, there is stiff opposition to introducing sports wagering at tracks.

Do you favor or oppose the Delaware Lottery expanding to offer (betting/gambling) on professional sports such as football, basketball, or baseball at Delaware’s horse racing tracks?

	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>
Betting on professional sports	35%	63%
Gambling on professional sports	36%	61%
Combined	36%	62%

- ✓ Opposition to the proposal is unique in the sense of the broad-based coalition that it creates – it unites the 24% of conservative moralists (89% oppose) and nearly seven in ten African Americans (68% oppose) against the proposal to expand gaming.
- ✓ The staunchest opponents to sports betting are seniors, with three-quarters (77%) opposing the sports betting proposal.
- ✓ Even among the 61% of voters who have engaged in some form of gambling over the last year, a solid majority (54%) are opposed to sports wagering at tracks.

3. ***Opposition stiffens further when proposals to include college sports or at retail outlets.***

Nearly eight in ten voters (78%) oppose betting on college sports, including an incredibly high 60% who are strongly opposed to the proposal.

Voters also do not want betting on sports to invade retail spaces, such as convenience stores or bars – three out of four voters (75%) are opposed to this option.

4. *There are very powerfully compelling arguments on the side of not allowing gaming in Delaware to expand into professional sports wagering.*

We tested a series of arguments against the proposal, with each survey respondent being read seven statements. Six of the arguments against the proposal score very highly, with 40% or more finding these statements “very convincing” as reasons to oppose the proposal. Generally, we consider an argument that scores a 30% or higher as an effective message. Thus, having six that exceed this threshold tells us very powerfully that these messages work and anti-expansion sentiment runs deep in the electorate.

STATEMENT	% Very Convincing	% Total Convincing
If we allow betting on professional sports, it won't be long until someone tries to make it legal to bet on college sports, like the Final Four in basketball or football bowl games, which would do tremendous harm to amateur athletics and college teams	46%	71%
Expanding gambling to include betting on sports will only increase the rate of gambling addiction in the state. Dealing with the negative consequences of addiction, such as poverty, broken homes, and crime far outweigh any possibly monetary benefits.	46%	70%
Sports are just so important to kids, and athletes often become role models. Making sports betting legal would give the wrong signal to our kids that betting and sports are compatible.	46%	67%
The state should not be promoting gambling by making it a part of the State Lottery. The state needs to look for other ways to raise revenue that are not as controversial.	44%	69%
Sports betting would ruin the integrity of games like football, baseball, and basketball because every mistake a player made would now be open to suspicion because of the amount of money bet on each game.	43%	65%
Any revenue generated that goes to the state will just be a drop in the bucket. It will not do much at all to help with our budget problems, but it will create a number of additional social and financial problems that our state will have to deal with, such as increased crime and addiction.	40%	65%

5. *In sharp contrast, even the strongest arguments on the side of those who favor expanding gambling fall flat.*

To provide a balanced perspective on the issue, we also tested a series of arguments in favor of the proposal, with each survey respondent being read six statements. Even the best statements on this side of the issue failed to reach the 30% very convincing threshold. Voters simply reject the idea that increased gaming will significantly impact the state’s revenues or economic outlook.

The best arguments on the side of those who favor sports betting include:

	<u>% Very Convincing</u>	<u>% Total Convincing</u>
<i>People are going to gamble anyway even if they have to go to Atlantic City to do it. It’s better to keep the revenue generated by gambling here in the state.</i>	29%	54%
<i>The State of Delaware is facing a severe budget crisis, which which threatens vital programs like education and health care. We need all the additional revenue we can get now, and the revenue generated from betting on professional sports is better than having to increase state taxes on Delaware families.</i>	29%	48%

6. *Voters simply lock down after they hear messages on both sides of the debate.*

With very well-entrenched opinions about the issue, voters do not move much in a post-message testing position question. Having heard messages on both sides, 34% favor the expanded sports gaming proposal, while 63% are opposed. To the extent there is movement on this final positioning question, intensity on the oppose side does tick up from 45% strongly opposed in the pre-message testing position question to 52% strongly opposed on this post-message test.

7. *And, voters are not likely to believe that adding sports gambling is a panacea for the state's economy and budget troubles. Compared to other types of companies and businesses in the state, horse racing and slot machines are not perceived to be a major contributor to the state's economy.*

Only 23% of voters consider the horse racing and slot machine industry to be a very important part of the state's economy. This pales in comparison to the primacy of other industries:

<u>Industry/Business</u>	<u>% Very Important</u>
Financial Services Companies	73%
High Tech Companies	51%
Chemical Companies	49%
Tourism	47%
Horse Racing/Slot Machines	23%

The lack of stature of the industry makes it challenging for those who might wish to expand gambling to make a compelling case that such expansion will significantly and positively impact the state's economy.

Methodology

Public Opinion Strategies conducted a telephone survey of 400 registered voters in the State of Delaware on March 9-10, 2003. A survey of 400 voters has a margin of error of $\pm 4.9\%$ in 95 out of 100 cases.