





Written by [Bruce Walker](#) on October 3, 2012

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lotteries, which have become an important sort of revenue for a number of state activities, could be affected. The National Governors Association has been just as concerned as the NCSL about what Reid is trying to do. The NGA informed members of Congress by letter earlier this year that gambling has “historically been regulated by the states.” New Jersey and California are both going ahead with plans to legalize online gambling, and are counting on revenue from that to help with budget shortfalls.

Another organization, the North American Association of State & Provincial Lotteries (NASPL), whose members include Canadian provinces as well as American states, has warned of potential harm from Reid’s proposal. Margaret DeFrancisco, chair of the Government Relations Committee of that organization, states:

It’s all money that the states absolutely rely on.... We don’t want to be restricted by the federal government telling us what gaming policy should be in the states.... The summary that we have seen is not terribly friendly to lotteries.... It’s very restrictive. We don’t want and we don’t need any federal legislation concerning lotteries. Period.

She also notes that the proposal seems intended just to help Reid’s home state: “This seems to be something just for Nevada. But for lotteries, we represent almost all of the country.”

Others have also noted that gambling and casino interests in Nevada have played a major role in fundraising for Reid. Caesars Entertainment and MGM Resorts International gave \$375,000 to an outside group supporting Reid in November 2010.

Some opponents of what Reid is trying to do object to the federal government raising revenue through gambling revenues. Congressman Spencer Bachus of Alabama wrote to Reid stating: “Congress should not take advantage of the young, the weak, and the vulnerable in the name of new revenues to cover more government spending.”

Conservative groups such as Focus on the Family have warned against making gambling even more accessible and giving it the blessings of the federal government. This position recognizes that activities which in America have long been described as “vice” — gambling, drinking, prostitution, and the like — have been within the purview of state government. Reid’s home state of Nevada, for example, has some places that allow legalized prostitution. Neighboring Utah, reflecting Mormon moral values that Reid, as a Mormon, presumably shares, has historically been the most restrictive regarding the sale of alcohol.

When Utah and other socially conservative states had restrictions on alcohol that were very similar to federal Prohibition, the result was not the rise of Al Capone and other crime lords. People who wanted a drink could cross a state line, or if people wanted to live where wine flowed freely, they could move. That option does not exist when the federal government preempts an area of regulation.

Even more troubling may be the fact that the federal government has almost never relinquished either power or money when it has moved into an area of government.

Finally, do we really want to reduce the federal deficit by revenues from vice?



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