

# Here's who stood for families, against gambling

There are 49 Iowa legislators – **from BOTH parties** – who deserve our thanks today.

These men and women stood up for Iowa families by voting “no” on a bipartisan push to expand gambling in Iowa.

Despite evidence that legalizing online sports betting will only increase the number of problem gamblers – leading to chronic financial and relational strain on Iowa families – a bipartisan effort in the Iowa Legislature pushed through a law this week that will expand gambling in Iowa to sports and online wagering.

A total of 31 legislators in the House and 18 in the Senate, however, refused to vote for the damage this new gambling law will do to Iowa families. These men and women – from BOTH parties – deserve our thanks! Those legislators include:

## **Iowa Senate:**

Jerry Behn  
Joe Bolkcom  
Jim Carlin  
Claire Celsi  
Jake Chapman  
Mark Costello  
Randy Feenstra  
Julian Garrett  
Eric Giddens  
Robert Hogg  
Herman Quirnbach  
Ken Rozenboom  
Jason Schultz  
Mark Segebart

Amy Sinclair  
Zach Wahls  
Zach Whiting  
Brad Zaun

**Iowa House:**

Rob Bacon  
Terry Baxter  
Liz Bennett  
David Deyoe  
Molly Donahue  
Dean Fisher  
Joel Fry  
Mary Gaskill  
Tedd Gassman  
Tom Gerhold  
Mary Ann Hanusa  
Lisa Heddens  
Steven Holt  
Lindsay James  
Davi Kerr  
Jennifer Konfrst  
Mary Mascher  
Heather Matson  
David Maxwell  
Andy McKean  
Anne Osmundson  
Scott Ourth  
Todd Prichard  
Sandy Salmon  
Jeff Shipley  
Mark Smith  
Art Staed  
Sharon Steckman  
Phyllis Thede  
Beth Wessel-Kroeschell  
Skyler Wheeler

During debate on the bill, one of these pro-family champions, State Rep. Sandy Salmon, delivered a powerful speech, which illustrates why sports betting is bad for Iowa. Those comments can be read or watched below:

### **Remarks on Sports Betting – IA State Rep. Sandy Salmon**

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If we think that with this bill we are not expanding gambling in the state of Iowa, we are only fooling ourselves and no one else. We are definitely not fooling the people of Iowa! This absolutely is an expansion of gambling in the state of Iowa!

In 3 ways:

1) in the types of gambling we will legally have. We will have professional and college sports betting in addition to casinos.

2) in the modes by which gambling can legally occur. We will now have legal online gambling in addition to brick and mortar gambling, which brings the availability and access to gambling to a whole new level, bringing it into every home and every smartphone into the state, thus increasing its danger and addictive power exponentially.

3) in the numbers of Iowans who will be gambling once this is in place. Those that are doing it illegally now will continue to do it, only legally. Where the expansion comes in is it will sweep in a whole new swath of people who would not likely get involved with sports betting, but now that it is legal, they will try it and get sucked in. This is especially true with the younger generation, who don't go to casinos but they are glued to the internet.

So yes, no two ways about it, this is an expansion of gambling. For all the reasons I have mentioned, this bill will usher in the biggest expansion of gambling in Iowa history.

As if the problems we have with gambling now aren't enough, here is the current situation, according to a UNI and IDPH

study:

1. 7 out of 10 Iowans have gambled.
2. 13% of Iowans are at-risk gamblers.
3. 21% of Iowans who currently play fantasy sports illegally are at-risk gamblers.
4. Massachusetts reports 5.7% of casino sports betters are problem gamblers, and when sports betting went online, the number skyrocketed to 18.2%.
5. Since legalization of sports betting, Australia has seen a 70% increase in problem gamblers, particularly among young men.
6. A U of Illinois professor says, "Virtually every piece of academic research says this is a bad idea for any number of reasons. But the big ones are the effect on the economy (and he means a bad effect) and the creation of more addicted gamblers at a younger age."

Another one of the worst things about the government now legalizing it is we lend to sports gambling an air of legitimacy and even safety. People tend to think when something is legal that it is OK and safe and even helpful and even that it can't hurt you. (We know what a lie that is.) And so it sucks people in with its lure of false and deceptive rewards.

The legislature whose job it is to look out for and protect Iowans is now deceiving Iowans and luring us into harm's way. We who should know better are now putting a stumbling block in front of the citizens we are sworn to protect.

Gambling appeals to the basest and worst instincts of us human beings – our tendency toward greed, corruption, wasting what we have, and the desire to make an easy dollar or "get rich quick." It also weakens the work ethic and strengthens our lazy streak by promising something for nothing.

Gambling also preys upon the weak and vulnerable, no matter what their income level. We are targeting the least-advantaged

and financially desperate Iowans, luring them into a Hail Mary investment strategy in which they are doomed to lose.

In addition, state government will have our hand out, basically drawing them into paying a tax. With this bill it can also be argued we are raising a tax on Iowans.

Gambling also damages and destroys marriages and families, often leading to divorce, child abuse, and domestic violence. It also in many cases drives them into poverty, bankruptcy, and financial ruin in addition to tempting some to commit crimes, such as embezzlement. And many more people will wind up captured by the tentacles of addiction as well as suffer from depression and anxiety leading some to suicide. I've seen some of these effects first hand, and there are plenty of people and studies who can testify to just such results.

The fallout of this expansion of gambling will be a heavier weight and draw upon our already overstrained budget, Medicaid, mental health care, substance abuse, children and family services, and our court system.

A recent poll conducted this past winter tells us a majority of Iowans, 52% oppose legalizing betting on professional sports. And a whopping 68% oppose legalizing betting on college sports. No poll exists that shows Iowans want internet gambling legalized.

This is a foolish, misguided, and ill-advised move on our part. Please join me in voting no to legalizing sports gambling in Iowa.

You can also **watch Salmon's comments by clicking here** and scrolling forward to the 6:34 p.m. mark.