



To the Editor:

**Proposed gambling expansion would bypass Missouri voters and casino regulations**

Missouri legislators may soon consider the largest expansion of gambling since the Missouri casino industry was established. HB 423 would allow thousands of new lottery slot machines to be installed at retail establishments throughout the state.

This irresponsible bill would permit slot machines on every street corner where a restaurant, bar, convenience store or truck stop is located. If passed, expect to see these machines -- which look and play just like casino slot machines -- in every city, town and community across the state.

The proposed gambling expansion would heavily affect those areas which do not have a casino in their community. The same towns and cities that may have opposed casinos could suddenly see hundreds of slot machines in their communities. As is already the case in Illinois, Missouri could very quickly have more slot machines outside of casinos than inside them.

This is not what Missouri voters envisioned when they voted in 1994 to approve casino wagering in Missouri. Voters were very careful to restrict casinos to certain locations. They also voted in 2008 to limit the number of casinos to thirteen.

Not only does the bill bypass voters, it also bypasses the strict casino gambling regulations established and enforced by our state's strong gaming commission. The proposed oversight, regulations, and security for these new slot machines are ludicrously inadequate. Busy retailers would be solely responsible for monitoring the machines and preventing underage youth from gambling. Retailers ALSO would not be required to promote responsible gaming nor have any program in place to restrict play for individuals on the self exclusion list as casinos do.

Sponsors of the bill try to characterize it as a compromise or regulatory piece of legislation, which is preposterous. If the legislature is truly concerned about illegal gambling machines, they should consider SB 431, which addresses that concern.

We encourage residents concerned about thousands of new lottery slot machines in their communities and on every street corner in Missouri to ask their legislators to vote no on HB 423.

Mike Winter

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