

We have a wave in this country which Dr. Schaffer at Harvard Medical School compares to a cocaine epidemic in gambling, a crack cocaine epidemic; and in a few minutes, each one of us will decide to end this addiction and this heartbreak and this threat to not only our sports programs in this country but to our fabric as a Nation, or we will decide to vote for the Cannon amendment and, again, kill this legislation and put it off.

I urge all the Members to take a strong stand against the killer amendments that will be offered, a strong stand for this legislation. Join with the credit card companies, the financial institutions, the many church groups in this country, law enforcement officers, National Governors Association, Attorneys General Association. If there is ever a clear vote in this House, this should be the vote. If there was ever a unanimous vote in this House, this should be the vote.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chairman, I am troubled by and opposed to the increasing reliance of government on gambling. We are seeing more evidence of its destructive power, even as the current financial crisis is driving more States to expand their gaming operations.

Gaming has been one of the tools that has enabled Native Americans to regain some economic footing after centuries of neglect, abuse, and broken promises. While this is not my favorite tool for their economic development, I do not favor treating tribal interests differently than we do for other private and State-sponsored gaming. The State exemptions in this bill violate that fundamental principle by regulating tribal gaming differently from State gaming, which is unfair and ultimately an unwise precedent.

I am opposed to illegal offshore betting and I would be happy to regulate internet gambling. I stand ready, if we can ever breach the wide array of vested interests to support legislation that does restrict gaming without singling out Native Americans for unequal treatment. This bill falls short of that mark, and I will not support it.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Chairman, H.R. 2143 limits the ability of individual citizens to use bank instruments, including credit cards or checks, to finance Internet gambling. This legislation should be rejected by Congress since the Federal Government has no constitutional authority to ban or even discourage any form of gambling.

In addition to being unconstitutional, H.R. 2143 is likely to prove ineffective at ending Internet gambling. Instead, this bill will ensure that gambling is controlled by organized crime. History, from the failed experiment of prohibition to today's futile "war on drugs," shows that the government cannot eliminate demand for something like Internet gambling simply by passing a law. Instead, H.R. 2143 will force those who wish to gamble over the Internet to patronize suppliers willing to flout the ban. In many cases, providers of services banned by the government will be members of criminal organizations. Even if organized crime does not operate Internet gambling enterprises their competitors are likely to be controlled by organized crime. After all, since the owners and patrons of Internet gambling cannot rely on

the police and courts to enforce contracts and resolve other disputes, they will be forced to rely on members of organized crime to perform those functions. Thus, the profits of Internet gambling will flow into organized crime. Furthermore, outlawing an activity will raise the price vendors are able to charge consumers, thus increasing the profits flowing to organized crime from Internet gambling. It is bitterly ironic that a bill masquerading as an attack on crime will actually increase organized crime's ability to control and profit from Internet gambling.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2143 violates the constitutional limits on Federal power. Furthermore, laws such as H.R. 2143 are ineffective in eliminating the demand for vices such as Internet gambling; instead, they ensure that these enterprises will be controlled by organized crime. Therefore, I urge my colleagues to reject H.R. 2143, the Unlawful Internet Gambling Funding Prohibition Act.

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of the Unlawful Internet Gambling Funding Prohibition Act. While I support the bill, I am disappointed that the legislation could not be further refined to satisfy the concerns of the Native American gaming community. I firmly believe that in its final form, any legislation must clarify the absolute legality of Native American gaming.

Last Congress, in response to 9/11, the Financial Services Committee passed significant new legislation curbing money laundering. During the course of hearings on the legislation, law enforcement testified that Internet gambling sites are often used for money laundering purposes by drug dealers and potentially by terrorists. As I've often said, criminals are like other business people in that they go out of business if you limit their money. This legislation will give law enforcement important new tools to cut off money laundering.

I also support the legislation because I fear that the explosion of the Internet and the access that young people have to it in their homes and schools creates an opportunity for them to fall victim to online gaming. The best way to keep young people from getting hooked on gambling is to limit their access to it. There is good reason that U.S. casinos do not permit individuals under 21 years of age from entering the premises.

While I support the bill, I am concerned that the concerns of the Native American gaming community have not been fully satisfied. Gaming has raised standards of living and provided economic development money to the Native American community that was missing for too long. Congress must not do anything to imperil gaming as a source of much needed jobs and commerce to reservations. I look forward to working with the Native American community on this issue going forward.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Chairman, you might remember a failed experiment the U.S. government tried in the 1920s called Prohibition. Today, Congress is rushing to pass a similar ill-conceived prohibition of Internet gambling. Gaming prohibitionists believe they can stop the millions of Americans who gamble online by prohibiting the use of credit cards to gamble on the Internet. Just as outlawing alcohol did not work in the 1920s, current attempts to prohibit online gaming will not work, either. Let me explain why.

In addition to the problems I addressed earlier, this bill lacks a number of important pro-

tections. It does not require that the businesses getting the special exception be licensed for Internet gambling, any kind of license will do. It does not require that these businesses keep minors from gambling as a condition of the license. It does not even require that these businesses limit the amount that can be gambled to protect problem gamblers.

And what about lotteries? Family values conservatives fight the lotteries in State after State. They say that there is no greater evil than State-sponsored gambling. The Justice Department said in their testimony that this bill would "absolutely" allow Internet gambling on lotteries.

This is not just my interpretation of this bill. The Free Congress Foundation, led by conservative activist Paul Weyrich, says this bill expands gambling. The Traditional Values Coalition, led by the Reverend Lou Sheldon, says this bill expands gambling. The United States Justice Department says this bill expands gambling.

And while many powerful gambling interests receive an exemption, less favored interests get the short end of the stick. Native Americans became more tightly regulated than the horse racing industries. It is unfair and unjustifiable public policy.

Instead of imposing an Internet gambling prohibition that will actually expand gambling for some and drive other types of Internet gambling offshore and into the hands of unscrupulous merchants, I believe Congress should examine the feasibility of strictly licensing and regulating the online gaming industry. A regulated gambling industry will ensure that gaming companies play fair and drive out dishonest operators. It also preserves State's rights.

The rules should be simple: if a State does not want to allow gambling in its borders, a licensed operator should exclude that State's residents from being able to gamble on its website.

That is why I introduced H.R. 1223, the "Internet Gambling Licensing and Regulation Commission Act." The bill will create a national Internet Gambling Licensing and Regulation Study Commission to evaluate how best to regulate and control online gambling in America to protect consumers and prevent criminal elements from penetrating this industry. In addition, the Commission will study whether the problems identified by gambling prohibitionists—money laundering, underage gambling, and gambling addictions—are better addressed by an ineffective ban or by an online gaming industry that is tightly regulated by the States.

Until now, Republicans and Democrats have stood together against those who wanted to regulate the Internet, restrict its boundaries, or use it for some special purpose. Except in the narrow areas of child pornography and other obvious criminal activities, Congress has rejected attempts to make Internet Service Providers, credit card companies, and the technology industry policemen for the Internet. We should not head down this road now.

Attempts to prohibit Internet gambling in the name of fighting crime and protecting children and problem gamblers will have the opposite effect. Prohibition will simply drive the gaming industry offshore, thereby attracting the least desirable operators who will be out of the reach of law enforcement. A far better approach is to allow the States to strictly license