

Testimony to the
Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee
of Congressman Jim Gibbons of Nevada
April 26, 2001

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Nevada's hardworking families, I would like to thank you for allowing me the opportunity to express my strong opposition to S. 718, the Amateur Sports Integrity Act.

As the senior Congressman from the State of Nevada, where sports wagering is legal, it is my pleasure to share my thoughts on this issue.

Like all of you, I firmly agree that maintaining the integrity of college athletics is an important goal.

However, there is absolutely no plausible evidence to suggest that the legal betting in Nevada is in any way responsible for the illegal sports wagering occurring mostly on our nation's college campuses.

Legal wagering on sports in Nevada makes up only one to three percent of all sports bets nationwide. [And no one under the age of 21 is allowed to gamble in Nevada]. The other 97 to 99% occurs illegally under existing federal and state laws.

By banning legal college sports betting in Nevada, you will actually eliminate an essential tool used by law enforcement to detect unusual betting patterns leading to illegal activity, such as the point shaving scandal involving some Arizona State University basketball players in 1994.

Consequently, law enforcement experts, including a former FBI official who currently is a member of the Nevada Gaming Control Board have stated that a ban, as proposed in S. 718, would not make a dent in illegal gambling.

So, what would be the effects and indeed unfortunate consequences of this misguided legislation?

First, S. 718 would create an unfortunate and undue economic burden on thousands of Nevada's families, whose livelihoods depend on the upstanding reputation of the casino-entertainment industry.

Second, Nevada's gaming industry is the largest taxpayer in our state. Therefore, a significant amount of tax revenue for schools and social services would be lost if S. 718 becomes law.

Third, S. 718 is an illegal bookie's dream! It would not, in any way, assist with the enforcement of our current laws limiting sports gambling. Even the NCAA Director of Agent and Gambling Activities has stated on national television that when it comes to law enforcement, the NCAA has "had a good relationship with the sports books in (Nevada)."

We need to support effective law enforcement measures which reduce the pervasiveness of illegal sports betting on and off of our college campuses. Perhaps the NCAA should look in the mirror and reconsider the numerous

"Final Four" sweepstakes which the NCAA and its corporate sponsors promote during "March Madness."

It is my hope that this Committee will not miss the opportunity to address the real problems of illegal sports betting, rather than focusing on Nevada's highly regulated industry, in a misguided attempt to remedy the societal problem of illegal sports wagering on college campuses.

Instead, I encourage you to consider the commonsense approach sponsored by Senators Ensign, Reid, Hatch and others. In the House, I have sponsored companion legislation that is co-sponsored by a bi-partisan group of over 80 Members.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts on this important issue, and I welcome your questions or comments.