

**Testimony of James C. Dobson, Ph.D.**  
**Member, National Gambling Impact Study Commission**  
**President, Focus on the Family**  
**Hearing before the Senate Commerce Committee**  
**re: Gambling on Collegiate and Amateur Athletic Events**  
**March 29, 2000**

Gambling poses a grave threat to the integrity of college sports, the welfare and well-being of the student-athletes involved, and the reputation and credibility of our academic institutions. That is why I and fellow members of the National Gambling Impact Study Commission recommended a complete prohibition on gambling on collegiate and amateur athletic contests.

Our recommendation came in response to the unprecedented rash of college sports betting scandals in recent years, involving athletes from some of our nation's most prestigious institutions. In addition, our Commission found an epidemic of sports gambling on college campuses, as well as an alarming rate of gambling addiction among college students.

Gambling proponents attempt to tell us that there is no link between legal and illegal gambling on college sports, that the problem lies entirely with illegal betting. They are wrong. The two are inextricably intertwined. The legalization of this type of gambling in Nevada conveys a false sense of legality to persons—especially youth—across the nation. In addition, most major newspapers publish the point spreads issued by Nevada casinos, further heightening both the sense of legitimacy and the interest in college sports gambling nationwide.

Some of the recent collegiate betting scandals have directly involved gambling at legal operations in Nevada. The former Notre Dame University place kicker involved in the Northwestern basketball betting scandal stated flatly, "Without the option of betting money in Nevada, the Northwestern basketball point-shaving scandal would not have occurred."

Those whose job it is to protect the student-athletes fully recognize the threat posed by legal gambling on college sports. That is why more than 60 of the most recognized football and basketball coaches in the National Collegiate Athletic Association support this ban.

Even the gambling regulators in Nevada understand the dangers of allowing gambling on college athletics, which is why they have wisely prohibited betting on games involving institutions from that state. Yet they are unwilling to extend those same vital protections to college student-athletes from the other 49 states.

Unless Congress acts to amend this loophole in the law, more scandals are almost certain to follow. Indeed, the incidents that have come to our attention may only represent the tip of the iceberg. A 1999 University of Michigan survey of male college athletes revealed that 5 percent had either gambled on a game in which they played, provided inside information for gambling

purposes, or accepted money for performing poorly in a game. These statistics, if accurate, mean that the performance of four or five players on every Division I college football team in America may be susceptible to gambling influences.

There is only one reason to allow this exploitation to continue. That is so that Nevada casino operators can continue to line their pockets with the estimated \$800 million legally gambled on college sporting events each year. That is hardly sufficient reason to continue to jeopardize the future of thousands of our most promising young people.

No one is naïve enough to suggest that this proposal would eliminate all gambling on college sports. But it represents the most important first step that can be taken to significantly reduce this scourge that threatens so many institutions and careers.

I applaud this Committee's willingness to tackle this politically charged issue. I urge each member of this Committee, and the rest of your colleagues in Congress, to place the welfare of college student-athletes, the integrity of collegiate sports, and the reputation of our academic institutions ahead of the financial interests of a handful of casino operators.

This is a tremendous opportunity for Congress to demonstrate its willingness to stand for principle in the face of the full-court press being applied by powerful gambling industry lobbyists. Passage of this legislation would be a major step in increasing the faith of American citizens in this body of government. I would be pleased to use the reach of my daily radio broadcast to inform our constituents about such courageous efforts.