

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5922

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Commerce, Trade, Housing & Financial Institutions, March 2, 1999

**Title:** An act relating to creating a program for compulsive gambling education and awareness.

**Brief Description:** Creating a program for compulsive gambling education and awareness.

**Sponsors:** Senators Prentice, Winsley, Rasmussen and Oke.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Commerce, Trade, Housing & Financial Institutions: 2/25/99, 3/2/99 [DPS].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, TRADE, HOUSING & FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5922 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Prentice, Chair; Shin, Vice Chair; Gardner, Hale, Heavey, Rasmussen, West and Winsley.

**Staff:** Catherine Mele (786-7470)

**Background:** The Washington State Council on Problem Gambling offers a toll-free information line and referral service for problem gamblers. The council does not give treatment to gamblers, but does provide referrals to various treatment options. The information line gives contact numbers for groups such as Gambler's Anonymous. If the caller requests, the information line gives referrals for outpatient treatment providers who charge a fee for their services. There are no inpatient treatment facilities for problem gamblers in Washington. The council also provides problem gambling awareness education materials and problem gambling training for treatment providers and the gambling industry. As part of its public education programs, the council has a youth problem gambling awareness program.

Current law directs the Gambling Commission, the Lottery Commission, and the Horse Racing Commission to develop and display, through licensees and retail establishments, information and materials on problem gambling. In the past the council has received financial support from various state agencies involved in gambling, and from many private and nonprofit gambling operations. There are no laws requiring state agencies or other gambling operations to fund the council's activities.

**Summary of Substitute Bill:** The Joint Select Committee on Problem Gambling is established. Committee membership includes four members from the House Commerce and Labor Committee and four members from the Senate Commerce, Trade, Housing and Financial Institutions Committee. The committee reviews the need for programs addressing

problem gambling and the appropriate industry response; the need to target youth issues; the appropriate level of service from the help line for problem gamblers and their families; and the appropriate level of public funding for treatment. The committee may consult with appropriate state agencies, the gambling industry, nonprofit organizations such as the State Council on Problem Gambling, community mental health organizations, and tribal governments involved in gaming. The committee must report to the Legislature by December 1, 1999. The committee terminates July 1, 2000.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:** The direction to the Gambling Commission, the Lottery Commission and the Horse Racing Commission to implement educational and treatment programs for problem gamblers and to fund these efforts is replaced with the creation of the Joint Select Committee on Problem Gambling. The appropriation of \$300,000 from the state lottery account to the Gambling Commission is removed.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 19, 1999.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Testimony For:** The Council on Problem Gambling supports the study in the substitute bill. There is definitely a need for a study and we will work with the Legislature on this issue.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** Gary R. Hanson, WA State Council on Problem Gambling (pro).