



## **AGAINST LEGALIZED GAMBLING**

### **and the NATIONAL COALITION AGAINST GAMBLING EXPANSION**

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100 Maryland Avenue NE, Room 311, Washington, DC, 20002 • 800-664-2680 • [www.ncalg.org](http://www.ncalg.org)

February 1, 2005

Dear Friends,

**W**e probably shouldn't be surprised at the places where gambling wants to groom customers – but we have to draw the line at the children's toy department.

This past Christmas season, “big box” retailers from Toys “R” Us to Wal-Mart sold titles rated “E,” meaning, “content suitable for people ages six and older,” – titles loaded with casino gambling games.

One “Game Boy” offering (rated appropriate for first graders) suggests, “When you're down on your luck visit the ATM, then hit the tables for more action.” That's an unhealthy message to send even to adults, and it's outrageous to be teaching it to grade school children.

Checking more of the stores, we found child-rated video poker games, paraphernalia and video slots games in nearly every major retail outlet. Costco was even selling remanufactured Japanese slot machines displayed between Tonka Trucks and Teddy Bears.

To me, these are the candy cigarettes of gambling. During the 1950's, research proved giving sweet candy cigarettes to children increased the likelihood of those children becoming addicted to tobacco later in life. Investigators also found tobacco companies were directly involved with the confection companies because they knew that would happen. They loaned the candy companies their looks, names and logos. Now gambling companies are doing exactly the same thing to entice future addictions.

The Golden Nugget game, which is licensed under an agreement with the Las Vegas casino by the same name, “features on-the-go versions of classic games like Blackjack, Craps, Roulette, Slots, and Video Poker. A password-based save feature lets you come back into the game with your accrued balance intact,” according to the game's own marketing information.

The Play Station “Slots” game at Toys “R” Us features “more than 40 authentic Bally Gaming slot machines including reel spinners, multiline, and video slots all rolled up into one interactive gambling extravaganza. Join the slots club membership and win prizes such as cars, cash and boats. The machines featured in this game are exact replicas of some of the most popular slots in the world. . . Real lights, real sounds, and authentic machines. This game is so close to the real thing, you'll think you're in Vegas,” according to its packaging.

“DD Tournament Poker,” on sale at big-box children's aisles “has a tournament manager for managing your own live home poker tournaments.” The manufacturer says, “We are currently in the planning phases for DD Tournament Poker 2.0, which is slated to include features such as Internet/LAN play.”

Surely Wal-Mart and Toys “R” Us understand they're making virtual casinos out of every home in America. They're profiting from products that train children to imagine winning and improving their lives through gambling. They are co-conspirators in setting children up for failure and addiction.

Though there is considerable argument over the accuracy of juvenile gambling addiction rates, nearly all writers agree the changing attitudes of adults and government are having an impact on children.

That impact brings greater participation in gambling, and with that comes

## **‘When you’re down on your luck, visit the ATM, then hit the tables for more action.’**

*. . . What Game Boy thinks is appropriate for First Graders!  
(From the packaging of their “Golden Nugget Casino” game, rated “E”)*

greater addiction. The National Gambling Impact Study Commission Final Report concluded young people may have an addiction rate two to three times as high as adults!

The federally funded commission concluded, “Clearly, adolescents are a segment of the population who are at particular risk of developing problems with gambling. This also is clearly an area in which targeted prevention efforts should be launched to curtail youth gambling.”

I don’t think this Addictions “R” us approach is what the commission had in mind. We surely can’t be telling parents and children that six years old is an appropriate time for children to start learning to play slot machines.

The worst part is that the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) doesn’t even seem to be aware that this is a problem, and neither does the Federal Trade Commission. The FTC has electronic forms for complaining about marketing violence to children, but nothing on either the ESRB or FTC sites offer an opportunity to raise other concerns. That’s nuts. Gambling is a health risk for America’s children.

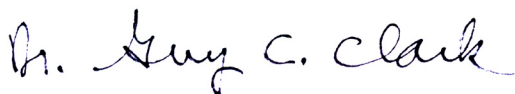
We take toys off the shelf when they have choking hazards or threaten the health of children. In the 1950’s, parents rallied and retailers relented. The candy cigarettes disappeared.

This emerging children’s health threat has joined our list of target issues for 2005. We have sent letters to the FTC, the ESRB and all of the major retail chains. We’ve also asked for support from the Boy Scouts, National PTA and other youth organizations. More letters from more of our friends would be a big help.

This year we face a busy agenda. Legislatures are moving into full session and gambling companies are spending millions on campaign contributions and lobbying. They’re out in force with petitions, paying signature gatherers big money to get initiatives on ballots where elected lawmakers won’t go along.

It’s a big fight, but last year we proved again that spreading the truth about gambling wins. You know, as we do, that spreading truth takes volunteers, time and money. Again, we ask for your help. Please be as generous as you can as we all work harder than ever to keep the insidious damage of legalized gambling away from our states, our communities and, now, our children’s toys.

Sincerely,



Dr. Guy C. Clark  
Chairman, NCALG/NCAGE

P.S., While you have your pen handy, won’t you also write a letter? Here are a few addresses to start with:

Entertainment Software Rating Board  
317 Madison Avenue, 22nd Floor  
New York, NY 10017

Federal Trade Commission  
600 Pennsylvania, NW, H-130  
Washington, DC 20580

Costco Corporation  
PO Box 34331  
Seattle, WA 98124

Wal-Mart Stores  
702 SW 8th Street  
Bentonville, AR 72716

Target Stores  
1000 Nicollet Mall  
Minneapolis, MN 55403