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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

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The President
The White House
Washington DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

You know how concerned I am about the explosive growth of gambling in the country. Casinos are no longer located just in Las Vegas and Atlantic City.

More and more states are turning to gambling as a way to fill their coffers, whether through state-sponsored lotteries or, in many cases, allowing Native American tribes to open casinos on reservations. Native American tribes also are aggressively seeking to take gambling off reservations and into local communities. Indian gambling nationwide has exploded into a \$19 billion-a-year industry from virtually nothing 15 years ago. Slot machines have become commonplace at racetracks.

Online gambling is wildly popular and booming. A recent story in *Sports Illustrated* detailing the current craze on college campuses of students playing online poker around the clock said that the independent tracking service PokerPulse.com says more than 1.8 million people play online poker each month and they wager an average of \$200 million a day, generating \$2.2 billion in gross revenue annually for the gambling industry. Simply put, gambling is spiraling out of control.

There is no doubt that gambling is destructive. It ruins families. It ruins businesses. It ruins communities. Gamblers often neglect their families and lose their jobs, careers and marriages to the habit. Gambling preys on the weak and exploits the poor. Study after study shows that when a casino opens in a community, crime, suicide and bankruptcies all rise.

Sadly, gambling has been glamorized. ESPN and other cable networks like the Travel Channel, Bravo and the History Channel regularly televise high-stakes poker games where winners take home thousands of dollars. Made-for-TV poker tournaments featuring Hollywood celebrities air regularly. Nightly lottery drawings are done live on TV. One of the networks this year even had a weekly drama whose plot centered around the running of a casino in Las Vegas.

Even more sadly, it's not only adults who are being seduced by gambling. According to a recent PBS NewsHour report, recent studies indicate that more than 70 percent of youth between the ages of 10 and 17 gambled in the past year, up from 45 percent in 1988. The National Academy of Sciences says almost one in three high school students gamble on a regular basis. The Council on Problem Gambling estimates 200,000 American teens are addicted to gambling. This is the future of country.

The President
June 23, 2005
Page 2

As if our nation isn't saturated enough with gambling, now comes news of plans to open a casino two miles from the historic Gettysburg battlefield.

President Lincoln, the father of our Party, in his famous address at Gettysburg said:

"We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who gave their lives that the nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate – we can not consecrate – we can not hallow – this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have hallowed it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here; while it can never forget what they did here."

The Civil War Preservation Trust and the National Park Conservation Association have been extremely vocal in their opposition to this plan. I realize it may be easy to dismiss this as a "local" issue, but this is Gettysburg. Its place in our history is sacred. Thousands of Americans from both the North and the South gave their lives at Gettysburg. We, as Americans, hold Gettysburg in the same vein as Lexington and Concord, Yorktown and Normandy.

As governor of Texas you were a strong voice in the fight against the spread of gambling. I am asking you as a father, as the leader of the Party of Lincoln, and as the president of the United States to re-engage in this issue.

Last month I sent you an extensive memorandum prepared by the Congressional Research Service giving you a number of options you and your administration could take to address this issue. I specifically asked you to issue an executive order placing a two-year moratorium on the opening of any more tribal casinos until Congress can thoroughly review the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988. If the information I sent was insufficient to address this issue, I urge you to direct your administration to draft legislation that will solve the problem and send it to the Congress.

As president you have espoused compassion and the protection of the American family. Rest assured, families are being destroyed by gambling. Your leadership is desperately needed on this issue, which affects our nation, our communities, our families and our children.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

Frank R. Wolf
Member of Congress