

Dear Mr. Stirewalt,

I am compelled to respond to your editorial of November 30, 2006 as it is full of inaccuracies and misinformation. I would very much like to take this opportunity to set the record straight regarding the limited video lottery industry and bust the myths you purport as a public service to all West Virginians.

You must give your fellow West Virginians some credit. They are intelligent enough to form their own opinions. As you well know, everyone has one. They should be, however, based on fact and not fiction.

Further, you must allow your fellow West Virginians to not be subjected to a paternalistic rant such as yours that gambling is bad. Limited Video Lottery is just one more form of entertainment, legalized entertainment, that is, and, whether you care for it or not, should be available especially considering the legislation that created LVL was enacted by the legislators who were voted in by the citizens of this great state.

Life is full of choices. I don't believe anyone in this state or anywhere would want to be told what they can and cannot do for entertainment. No one is being "fleeced". The last thing, I believe, is that anyone would want to be dictated to regarding how they may spend their paycheck. I know I wouldn't!

LVL revenue, through the stewardship of the legislature and WV Lottery Director John Musgrave, has benefited all West Virginians whether they play the machines or not. The industry has generated over a half a billion dollars since its inception in 2001.

Economic development bond money, which has made possible Cabela's in Wheeling, Appalachian Power Park in Charleston, and many other development projects throughout the state, PROMISE Scholarship funding, and two-thirds of the operating budget for the Problem Gamblers Help Network of WV reflect benefits of LVL revenue.

Two percent of LVL revenue is distributed to municipalities and counties for their general operating funds. This money funds, for example, equipment for volunteer fire departments and police departments and bleachers for local little league fields.

The cities and regions home to such enhancements shouldn't mind the lost revenues and jobs. You'll be publishing this information in the State Journal for all to be aware?

The "blight" of LVL retailer locations throughout the state and the over 300 permit holders who own the machines employ over 5000 people. Another outstanding fact about the LVL industry is that, in order to secure a LVL license, you MUST be a resident of West Virginia. As you are well aware, that is not one of the requisites for owning a racetrack/casino in West Virginia. Out of state corporations own the racetracks.

There exist over 1700 licensed locations throughout West Virginia in the form of bars, restaurants, and coffee shops. Once again, these location owners must be residents of this state. We are proud to say the LVL industry is West Virginia owned and operated!

I can't imagine you advocate putting over 5000 West Virginians out of work and closing over 1700 businesses. West Virginia is, in the words of our governor, open for business. Considering the state of the economy and the jobless rate, you should be a cheerleader for the LVL industry, not an adversary.

Proceeds from table games, should they pass given the county referendum, would benefit seniors as prescribed by Governor Manchin in the November 28, 2006 report that appeared in the Charleston Gazette newspaper. It's a great thing to avail the opportunity for seniors to remain in their homes with assisted care instead of having to resort to nursing homes. That is "something happy". We applaud Governor Manchin's intentions.

We don't believe that Limited Video Lottery needs to be sacrificed in the process of procuring table games. All can co-exist peacefully and prosperously and, once again, benefit each and every citizen of West Virginia.

No one in the gaming industry ever said the budgets would be busted were it not for gambling. If funds for the above mentioned projects and programs existed prior to the Limited Video Lottery Act of 2001, shame on the members of past legislatures and those in the media for not calling attention to the need for such programs and the availability of funding.

Neither the programs nor the funds for such existed. How do I know? The legislators you refer to in your piece have told us...in countless forums, town hall meetings, election events and venues across the state. Lawmakers have "come clean" on this fact.

I can't imagine you advocate doing away with PROMISE scholarship funding - both current and future. Would you like to tell current and future college students and their parents that attending college may no longer be a reality and just got a whole lot more expensive? When you're finished telling the students their tuition is no longer covered after working so hard to earn it, you must inform the state colleges and universities that, as there are now less students attending, there is less need for education bonds necessary for campus improvements.

The late U.S. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York said it best: "Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but not to their own set of facts." Unfortunately, we continue to read and hear the ongoing rhetoric, such as yours, that nothing good comes from this form of gaming - and that's all it is, rhetoric.

Finally, please be advised there is no "typical" LVL patron. Recent Marshall University research concluded those who enjoy this form of legal entertainment are of varied economic and social background, of varied age, and of varied race. How insulting it is for one to pass judgment on others simply because they maintain a biased opinion on an alternate form of entertainment. Perhaps you might consider to "live and let live"?

West Virginians are "not lying to [themselves]". You, however, are in denial. You are denying the fact that LVL permits holders are legitimate business men and women trying to make a living just like you, and that these businesses could be easily done away with without consequence!

These livelihoods and the benefits that result from them are exactly why the board of directors and members of the West Virginia Amusement & Limited Video Lottery Association, of which I am president and not a lobbyist, are working to insure a healthy future for the LVL industry. Over 5000 jobs and 1700 businesses are at stake.

Respectfully,

Anthony "Herk" Sparachane
President
WV Amusement & Limited Video Lottery Association