



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
**GAMBLING COMMISSION**

*"Protect the Public by Ensuring that Gambling is Legal and Honest"*

**For Immediate Release:**

January 14, 2009

**Penalties for Minors that Gamble - HB 1040/SB 5040**

**OLYMPIA...**Richland Sen. Jerome Delvin is sponsoring a bill at the Gambling Commission's request that would make underage gambling a civil infraction. He will testify on Senate Bill 5040 before the Senate Labor, Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee Thursday at 3:30 p.m.

"The lure of quick money is causing many of our young people to start gambling – and getting into trouble – early in life," said Sen. Jerome Delvin, sponsor of the request legislation and an ex-officio member of the Gambling Commission. "Washington needs a law with penalties, along with the inability to recover losses or keep winnings, to help encourage young people to wait until adulthood."

The legal limit for most gambling in Washington State is 18. However, Washington law does not have a penalty against minors who gamble. Civil citations can be issued to minors who purchase cigarettes and alcohol.

This bill creates a penalty of \$125 fine (up to \$256 with court costs), the possibility of four hours of community service, and requires underage gamblers to forfeit his/her winnings. Establishing a civil penalty for minors who gamble would provide better enforcement, as penalties would then apply to all parties involved – the minor, the card room operator, and the card dealer.

This legislation is supported by gambling licensees, the Washington Association of Sheriff and Police Chiefs, the Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, and the Department of Social and Health Services, Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse.

**History of Underage Gambling Legislation**

In 2007 and 2008, a similar bill passed the house by an overwhelming margin. The 2009 legislation states the minor would not be able to collect winnings or recover losses. This was not in the 2007 and 2008 bill.

**Gambling Commission Emphasis Patrols**

In 2004, the Washington State Gambling Commission began emphasis patrols to determine if house-banked card rooms were allowing minors to gamble. Gambling Commission agents work with underage operatives who try to enter card rooms and gamble. The inspections are often done in partnership with the Liquor Control Board and the operative also tries to purchase liquor.

## **Compliance**

At first, the percentage of card rooms passing inspections was low; however, it has steadily improved.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Inspections</b>	<b>Passed Inspection</b>
2004	16	44%
2005	42	55%
2006	76	58%
2007	92	72%
2008	105	78%

## **Penalties**

**1<sup>st</sup> Violation:** Citations are given to the card dealer and card room operator with a \$200 - \$300 fine.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Violation within a year:** Administrative charges are issued which may result in a suspension of the gambling license, a fine, or both.

## **Training**

Earlier this year, Gambling Commission agents and Liquor Control Board agents trained card room operators and their staff on ways to prevent minors from gambling and purchasing alcohol, and how to determine a valid ID from a fake one.

## **For Interview Contact: ‘**

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