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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EVERGREEN COUNCIL ON PROBLEM GAMBLING AND WASHINGTON STATE GAMBLING COMMISSION PARTNER ON UNDERAGE GAMBLING AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Olympia, WA Not only is underage gambling illegal in Washington State, but it can result in some very serious consequences, including problem gambling. This is the message of a new Public Service Announcement campaign by the Evergreen Council on Problem Gambling and the Washington State Gambling Commission. Beginning on January 31, the ads will run on KOMO TV and Fisher Radio stations throughout Washington State, and on the web. ECPG and the Gambling Commission are hoping that the PSAs will help raise awareness of an often-overlooked issue.

Minors are prohibited from participating in most of the gambling activities offered in Washington State, but the fact is that minors do still engage in gambling activities. In 2009, gambling by minors in gambling establishments became a civil infraction, with penalties including a fine up to \$125, up to four hours of community service, court costs, and forfeiture of winnings. Rick Day, director of the Commission, notes that "The State Gambling Commission performs underage gambling inspections at gambling facilities," and the issue of underage gambling eventually leading to problem gambling is a concern for the Commission. The PSAs will directly target parents. Director Day sums up the messaging nicely: "Kids make choices every day. Let them know underage gambling is illegal and can lead to problem gambling."

According to the 2008 Washington State Healthy Youth Survey,* more than 2,000 high school seniors were already having problems because of gambling. Many problem gamblers who seek treatment as adults report that they started gambling while in their teens, some even earlier. Gambling activity is also associated with other risk behaviors among youth, including alcohol and tobacco use. Declining academic performance, loss of interest in social activities and sports, and mounting debt are just some of the negative consequences that can result from underage problem gambling.

The responsibility for helping our youth make healthy choices now and in the future is shared by all of us, said Maureen Greeley, Executive Director of The Evergreen Council on Problem Gambling. "Our Council is pleased to partner with the Washington State Gambling Commission to raise awareness of underage gambling issues. Today's youth have grown up with gambling opportunities all around them. Risky and exciting activities can attract many teenagers. The time to talk about gambling and other risky behaviors is early as children often begin gambling during grade school."

*Conducted by the Department of Health, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Social and Health Service's Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery, Department of Commerce, and Liquor Control Board.

The Evergreen Council on Problem Gambling (ECPG) is a non-profit corporation recognizing the importance of addressing problem gambling in Washington State and nationally. ECPG is dedicated to increasing public awareness of problem gambling, expanding the availability of services for problem gamblers and their families, and encouraging research and programs for prevention and education.



The Washington State Gambling Commission (WSGC) is the second oldest gambling regulatory agency in the nation. WSGC is a law enforcement and licensing agency. No tax dollars are used to fund the agency; it is self supporting through licensing and regulatory fees. WSGC's Mission is to "Protect the Public by Ensuring that Gambling is Legal and Honest".

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