

Ladies and gentlemen of the Gaming & Oversight Committee and all others present, good morning. My name is Jim Laufenberg and I am the Legislative Chairman of The American Legion, Department of Pennsylvania. I would like to speak to you regarding House Bill 169 Small Games of Chance. We have been here before, and if it were as easy as saying please pass this house bill, I would do so. However, it is not that easy.

I would like to make reference to several points:

- The current law
- Enforcement of the law
- Legions in local communities
- Casinos

The Current Law

As you know the current law has not been changed or altered in more than 23 years and although acceptable 23 years ago, limits on winnings are no longer workable to our American Legion Posts. As we all know in the last 23 years most goods and services have gone up in cost. Now more than ever with the cost of gasoline and utilities at all time highs, all who live and work in this city, state and nation are directly impacted. These rising costs also directly and indirectly impact all facets of business and home life. The cost to operate and maintain legions in concert with our charters and to support our local communities and our veterans has become almost impossible.

HB 169, reintroduced by Representative Sheryl Delozier in the 2011 session, is the bill The American Legion Pennsylvania supports, in its entirety.

This bill, which made it through the House twice but unfortunately failed in the Senate, will enable our American Legion posts and their members to support their local communities and our veterans. These members are the lifeblood of The American Legion as well as all non- profits. The language in HB169 allows for general operating expenses to be paid in part by small games of chance. Forty percent would be available to be used for general operating expenses and would enable us to keep our doors open to our veterans and in support of our communities. The additional 60% would be given back to the communities by support through donations/sponsorship of local fire and police departments, schools, youth sports teams, scouting programs and others, as well as various charities such as the Wounded Warriors, Heroes to Hometowns, Operation Comfort Warriors and Veterans of Valor, just to name a few. Without HB169 many Legions and other non-profits will be in jeopardy. Some will close and others will eventually disappear. We need this bill to enable us to support our veterans and our communities.

Enforcement of the Law – Liquor Control Enforcement (LCE)

Many clubs have had the LCE come in to inspect and enforce the laws as directed. This is the normal course of events for most clubs and all are willing to listen and comply with the recommendations. However, there seems to be a lack of continuity between inspecting officers and the laws as they are written. Are the written rules or guidelines not clear? Rules are open to individual interpretation of the written law. What one inspecting officer interprets as a violation, another inspecting officer may interpret as compliance.

The American Legion in local communities

The clubs' members are comprised of local veterans and their family members who choose to become part of The American Legion family. These clubs are not part of a conglomerate or corporation but instead are owned by its members and are run and managed by those members in the neighborhood communities. The operation of the Legion is solely supported by its members and their own monies. Any profit earned by the Legion's local membership is for the benefit of that membership and the local communities where they reside.

Casinos

Casinos have had an adverse impact on all Legion posts. The monies being spent outside at local casinos and not at our local American Legion posts have affected a number of community programs and unfortunately those monies do not get back to the local communities. Those suffering from a decrease in funding are the state homes and veterans hospitals, fire and police departments and youth sports.

In closing, let me say that these Legion members, veterans, their families and community first responders are your voting constituents; they are in your communities and need your support.

Ladies and gentlemen I thank you for your time.

My colleague Joe Cocco will be briefing you on monies that have gone back into the communities.

God bless America and The American Legion.

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Jim, a 33-year veteran of the United States Army (1970-2003) and honorably discharged as a Chief Warrant 5, currently serves as the Legislative Chairman for The American Legion, Department of Pennsylvania.

Also relative to his 10-years as a member of The American Legion, Jim serves as the 19th District Membership Chairman, has been Post Commander for two years at Lawnton Post 998, serves as State Vice President in The American Legion Riders, which he actively participates in various events the group organizes. He also serves on the Foreign Relations Commission at our National level.

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