



Letters to the Editor

Video gaming terminals wrong for Pennsylvania

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http://www.theintell.com/opinion/letters/video-gaming-terminals-wrong-for-pennsylvania/article_cba55fd-fc58-5ee0-a75c-ffe41a5e47db.html

Right now in Harrisburg, there is a debate going on over how to raise the revenue to pay for next year's state spending budget, passed June 30. Much of the arguing has come down to three letters: VGT. That stands for video gaming terminals: gambling machines that could be installed in as many as 40,000 locations — stores, restaurants, shopping malls, bars, social clubs and even nursing homes — across Pennsylvania.

Proponents of VGTs say they will raise more than \$100 million. What they don't tell you is the cost to other vital parts of our state's economy, chief among them the casino industry that provides tens of thousands of good-paying jobs and already provides hundreds of millions of tax dollars to the state and local communities.

Those pushing VGTs also ignore the negative social impact of low-income people dumping paychecks into an ever-increasing forest of gambling machines in every nook and cranny of our communities.

In other states that have allowed VGTs, overall tax revenue to the state stayed static. People gambled the same amount; they just did it in different ways. So who got hurt? Local counties and municipalities that already had casinos. As people gambled more in corner stores, tax revenues to local governments provided by casinos dropped.

Here in Bucks County, our state legislators voted in unity against legalizing VGTs because they understand a few important things. First, Pennsylvanians don't want or need a mini-casino on every corner. They don't want the unique and special character of our local communities ruined.

Second, Bucks County and local taxpayers deserve the money casino gaming provides our community. The fact is, every time Bucks County sends a dollar to Harrisburg, we get pennies back. We shouldn't be forced to lose more because some special interests want to get their hands in our pockets.

We thank our Bucks County legislators for standing up for us and for opposing VGTs. There are better ways of raising revenue, including HB 1662, introduced by Rep. Scott Petri, R-178, to add a severance tax on Marcellus Shale. We don't understand how conservative Republicans like Speaker Mike Turzai think that plastering our communities with neon-flashing, bell-ringing slot machines helps to maintain our quality of life.

As political leaders in Harrisburg pressure our local legislators to change their vote, I urge every Bucks County resident to call your state senator and representative and tell them to stand strong against video gaming terminals.

Tam St. Claire, president

Bucks County Women's Advocacy Coalition

The coalition comprises 40 organizations and hundreds of individual partners that serve women and girls.