

Editorial

Benefits of video lotteries a myth

It is time for Nebraska to bring an end to the nonsense it calls electronic video lotteries. Call it by any other name, but it's still legalized gambling and it should be stopped.

Proponents of electronic lotteries have failed to prove that the machines provide any benefits to the state. Nebraska law does require that profits go toward community betterment projects. The theory, then, is that less public money will be spent on these projects and the state's tax burden will decrease.

Wrong. Government agencies at all levels have proven many times that when they find new sources of revenue, they don't reduce taxes, they just find new ways of spending money.

The bad effects of gambling, however, are obvious. The hope for instant riches often leads those who can least afford it to plug money into the machines. That can have a disastrous impact on the well being of low-income families. The gambling industry is controlled from out of state and you can bet that those in charge are more concerned with their own profits than what impact they are having on Nebraska.

To their credit, several Nebraska senators have pushed LB744, a proposal to ban video lotteries, through the first round of debate. The bill is expected to pass on its second and final readings as well. Unfortunately, Sen. John DeCamp of Neligh was successful in his attempt to amend the bill so that its effective dates would move from Oct. 1 of this year to Jan. 1 of 1985.

Such a change may seem insignificant, but its impact could be far-reaching. If the effective date is Jan. 1, the Legislature would be back in session only hours after the bill became law. By passing such legislation, senators could calm the fears of their constituents for another year but have the option of repealing it before it has a chance to take effect.

As the *Sunday Journal and Star* correctly pointed out on its editorial page, the senators could, at the very least, employ the method of non-enforcement used by Sen. Bernice Labeledz of Omaha last year. After a law had gone into effect prohibiting studded snow tires, Labeledz promised to introduce legislation repealing the ban. She made such an issue of it that state officials declined to enforce the ban until the Legislature



had another chance to hear the issue.

DeCamp has proposed putting the video lottery issue on the general election ballot. That would seem to be the most democratic way of solving the problem, but it gives the proponents of lottery machines — the companies that manufacture them — an unfair advantage. When one side has lots of money and the other side doesn't, the outcome of an election usually is predictable. Just like the failed attempt several years ago to charge a deposit on beverage cans, the big money forces probably would stop any attempt to ban the machines.

What Nebraska needs is an immediate and complete end to video lotteries. That action ought to be brought about by the Legislature during the remaining few weeks of this session. With the parimutuel betting and organized bingo already allowed, the state's citizens have plenty of ways to gamble their money.

Innocent bystanders now claim guilt

It is just 20 years since Kitty Genovese became one of the few victims of crime we remember by name. On March 13, 1964, this young woman was stabbed repeatedly near her Queens, N.Y., home. That night, 38 people heard her screams for help, but not one called the police until she was dead.



Ellen Goodman

The chilling anniversary of her death occurs just as the New Bedford rape case has come to trial. There, a woman has testified she was held down on a pool table in a bar named Big Dan's and raped while others watched and cheered.

Both of these cases in their own time have touched a sensitive public nerve about callousness as well as crime. The classic line from the Kitty Genovese case was from a witness: "I didn't want to get involved." The memorable line in the alleged barroom rape was the reported cheer: "Go for it."

In neither instance were all the bystanders as uncaring as we may have believed at first. The attacks on Kitty Genovese were stopped twice by yells from windows. At least one of the men in Big Dan's, the bartender, says he tried to contact the police when he sensed trouble.

What rivets public attention to these and dozens of similar tales of violence are the crimes of omission — Bad Samaritanism, if you will. We are profoundly disturbed by the idea that one human being can watch another being hurt without helping. It makes us all feel more vulnerable, isolated, alone.

In the years since Kitty Genovese's murder, social scientists have learned a great deal about bystander behavior. They've learned that willingness to intervene depends on a number of subtle factors beyond fear.

It turns out that people are less likely to help if they are in a crowd of bystanders than if they are the only one. Their sense of responsibility is diffused. If others aren't helping, they begin to reinterpret what they are seeing.

People also are more passive in urban neighborhoods or crowded city spots where they suffer from "excessive overload" and simply turn off. They rarely get involved if they believe the victim knows the assailant. This is especially true if the crime being witnessed is, as alleged in both these cases, a rape or

attempted rape.

But the irony is that Bad Samaritans are not comfortable with their apathy. In many crimes, says Dr. Charles Korte, a psychologist at North Carolina State who has done some of this research, "they are not just callously viewing the situation. I'm quite sure that bystanders are going through tremendous internal conflict, but they can't bring themselves to do anything."

We can't prove there are fewer cases of bystander apathy today than 20 years ago. But we do know that public acceptance of "not getting involved" has practically disappeared. Indeed, most of us have come to favor a law that would require bystanders to help.

Dr. Harold Takooshian, who has organized a Kitty Genovese memorial conference at Fordham University on March 10, says that after the Genovese murder, 75 percent of those polled still thought intervention should be left to one's own conscience. But by the time he repeated the survey last year after the New Bedford case, 80 percent agreed that a person should be required to help, or at least phone the police, or face a fine or jail sentence.

There already are many such "duty to rescue" laws in countries like France, West Germany and the Soviet Union. But only three states (Vermont, Rhode Island and Minnesota) have adopted a model bystander law that explicitly states a citizen's "duty to rescue" a victim under certain conditions — when, for example, the bystander is not in danger himself.

Perhaps we have become more sensitive to victims or simply more conscious of the social effect of apathy in the face of a criminal. As Dr. R. Lance Shotland, a researcher at Penn State University, says, the Bad Samaritan gives a message to the criminal "to go ahead, that it's easy."

Shotland says, "There's a delicate balance between social control and criminal behavior. Only as people get involved do we preserve social control."

Any "duty-to-help" law is largely symbolic. There is no sure way to compel one person to help another. But widespread adoption of the law would show public support for the ethical instinct to help, the belief that people have responsibility to each other. It would be, finally, a statement that was missing the night of Kitty Genovese's death: We want to get involved.

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Apathy abounds as ASUN candidates just stuff resumes

The ASUN elections are this Wednesday. That's two days from now. For many of you, or I should say, most of you, that is news. Mainly because you don't care about ASUN, you don't know about ASUN, and even if you did know about ASUN, you wouldn't care about ASUN. Believe me.

So Wednesday, elections will determine who will comprise a student organization that few of us care about.



Bill Allen

This isn't another lecture on student apathy. I don't care if you're apathetic, and that's about as apathetic as you can get. If this were a city, state or national election I would chastise you for apathy and a low voter turnout. That stuff is important. ASUN isn't important. It's a joke.

I want to explain why I feel this way. I think this will also explain why students are so apathetic.

First of all, ASUN is criticized for being nothing more than a resume stuffer for those involved with it.

Whether that is true is of little importance. Even if ASUN were important, people would criticize those involved for stuffing their resumes. It shouldn't matter to us if the people involved stuff their resumes, because we don't care about ASUN, right?

Also, people say that ASUN is nothing more than an extenuation of the Greek system. To some degree that is true. There are a large number of Greeks in the campus government, but one can't say it is an extension of the Greek system because it is not exclusive to Greeks. Anybody that wants to run for an office can. If they get more votes than the Greek candidate, they win. And that happens.

The reason for the large number of Greeks in ASUN is that they are better organized. I'm not saying that is good, necessarily. Hitler was better organized than many of the allied forces. So, ASUN being predominantly Greek isn't good or bad to us, because we don't care about ASUN.

So right there I've shown that two of ASUN's biggest criticisms aren't important.

But there's one more.

The ones of us who even know what ASUN is voice another criticism. ASUN does nothing for me.

One of the most paradoxical things I remember about ASUN was the last time tuition was increased. ASUN members told students what they had done to prevent the increase, yet tuition increased. They tried, sure, but they didn't prevent the increase.

Every year they talk about parking problems. In my three years of college I've been towed once. It was a result of a) I was ticketed for an expired meter on more than one occasion, and b) after not paying the tickets I was towed away by the pretty trucks from Lincolnland.

So right there I can offer the solution to one of ASUN's biggest problems. If you don't want to get towed, don't park where you shouldn't. It's simple.

ASUN people say that if people get involved with ASUN they will see what it does for them. No way, people. The burden of proof is on ASUN. We're getting along just fine without you. You have to prove to us that you are worthwhile. We already think that you are not. Prove us wrong. If your candidates really care about the students, as you claim, you would prove this. You wouldn't say, well, we tried. You will prove it.

Maybe you could send out a newsletter. For the past three years, there has always been talk of a widely circulated newsletter to let students know what is going on. I've seen maybe three. Is all that going on? You tell me.

Now I expect ASUN people to say that everything I've written here is untrue. I expect that. But I, and the 21,000 other students that attend the university who will not vote Wednesday, know that what I have said is true.

ASUN, when you get your 10 to 20 percent voter turnout at the polls, then tell me that we care.

ASUN, until you prove us wrong, we can get along fine without you. I know it's not a holiday, but "happy resume stuffing."