

Daily Nebraskan

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EDITORIAL

Still gambling

Education needs its piece of lottery pie

One year ago, the state of Nebraska initiated a state lottery. In doing so, Nebraska encountered criticism that the lottery would be a regressive tax and heard the often-speculated view that state-sanctioned gambling fostered illegal gambling and other unsavory vices.

But the state took a chance. A chance that Nebraskans supported at the polls. A chance that Nebraskans who were spending their gambling dollars out of state would start spending them inside the state's borders.



Brett Gottschall/DN

The crapshoot paid off. The lottery has caught fire in the state. In its first year, Nebraskans spent more than double the projected \$30 million.

All this means lots of extra money in state coffers. And with the Legislature's penchant for slashing budgets, the newly found revenue is a gold mine for frequently neglected areas of education and the environment.

Innovative education programs use 49.5 percent of the lottery revenues, 25 percent of the money goes to environmental projects, 24.5 percent helps pay

for closing local landfills, and the final 1 percent is saved for counseling and rehabilitating compulsive gamblers.

But as the lottery brings in considerably more revenue than expected, it's a pretty sure bet that state legislators will try to tap into these funds in the 1995 session.

In fact, a bill in the Legislature this spring would have given any second-year lottery revenue exceeding first-year profits to maintenance projects in state buildings.

The bill died, but with the tremendous amount of money the lottery is accumulating in its first year, similar bills are likely to reappear.

Although many of the state's buildings are in serious decay, education is an already deprived aspect of the state budget that needs the extra money. The fact that the state can't give more real money to education — just a percentage of predicted lottery money — is scary in itself. The idea of cutting into the already uncertain lottery's education pie is particularly frightening.

After one year, the lottery is a success, and happy are the programs that will get its revenue. The lottery is popular, and all is well with scratch-off tickets and Powerballs.

But the newness of the lottery will wear off. Less money will be spent on it, and less money will be available.

And there are still questions to be answered: Are the wrong people spending their money on the lottery? Can they afford it? Will we have to spend increasing amounts on rehabilitating compulsive gamblers?

After 12 months of gambling, the verdict is still out.

EDITORIAL POLICY

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MEHSLING
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Lynch mobs common

I was at the pen, in the crowd of anti-death penalty people, on the night of the Otey killing. I thought I might spot the governor and the attorney general in that crowd on the other side of the fence; I looked, but I never did spot them. Of course, the crowd was large, and I could have missed them even if they were there.

Since that evening, Gov. Ben Nelson and others have expressed some distress at the conduct of the pro-execution crowd, with their swastikas, racial epithets, party atmosphere and references to barbecues. But they should not have been surprised. Such crowds are common at racial killings throughout the United States ever since the Civil War, and they have occurred in Nebraska before — for example, in Omaha in 1919. I personally wrote the State Patrol last July 21 predicting such a crowd and urging them to make adequate crowd-control preparations, which fortunately they did.

The name for such a crowd is a "lynch mob." The only difference between the Sept. 1-2 crowd and the more traditional Southern lynch mob or the 1919 Omaha lynch mob, is that, in the older cases, the killing of the black human object of hatred was done out of doors by the crowd itself, whereas, in 1994, it was done indoors under the orders of high state officials.

The crowd did the state an unintentional service by making clear the historical pedigree and present associations of pro-execution "thinkers" and "leaders."

The enthusiastic inciting of the Otey killing by the state's largest newspaper continued to spill out even after its goal had been achieved; on Sept. 8, the Omaha World-Herald wrote editorially that the crowd's activities were "not so shocking."

Nelson Potter
associate professor
philosophy

Prozac

Just a few comments on the Daily Nebraskan editorial cartoon of Sept. 8, which attributes the decline in

spunkiness of a dog named Spot to the addition of Prozac to his diet:

If one accepts the findings reported in the recently published "Talking Back to Prozac," Spot is more likely to react to the celebrated antidepressant by jumping up and down, running around the house and barking a whole lot more. The book maintains that Prozac produces effects similar to those of amphetamines and cocaine. Thus, Spot's spunkiness should increase, not decrease.

In a recent "Life in Hell" cartoon, Matt Groening made a funnier and much more realistic comment on Prozac: One of the characters, Jeff, relates in sumptuous detail how his whole world view has changed for



Brett Gottschall/DN

the better in a quantum leap — just since he had breakfast, in fact. His buddy, Akbar, deadpans in response, "I put Prozac in your corn flakes."

Groening packs a lot of irony and social satire in that strip. He shows how many people view the potential of Prozac — as sort of a seriously wonderful thing (see "Listening to Prozac") — then deflates that expectation with "I put it in your cereal."

For a thought-provoking look at the pros and cons of Prozac, check out the two books mentioned above and compare the authors' raps. In the meantime, the Daily Nebraskan

might check out what it is putting in its cartoonists' cereal. If Spot is indeed too spunky for you, consider adding Haldol, a major antipsychotic, to his diet. That would not only stop him in his tracks but perhaps cause him to keel over into his dog chow.

Tim Bryant
junior
water science

Population conference

The World Conference on Population is supposed to be coming up with some solutions to deal with the "population crisis." Many of these solutions are completely disrespectful of motherhood.

The ability of women to bear children is a very special gift. It is the single most important difference between a woman and a man. The devaluing of motherhood is a key to many of the proposals in the conference.

Worldwide sex education is one such proposal. The idea is to give all teen-agers access to the pill and condoms. What we need to be teaching teen-agers is the consequences of becoming sexually active. We need to teach them to take responsibility for their actions, no matter what happens afterward.

Raising the status of women by encouraging higher education is another proposal. All human beings deserve an education regardless of gender, and women especially need higher education, but not as a way to reduce population. Women need a good education regardless of what decisions they make about motherhood.

Another idea is providing economic incentives to have fewer children. What about women who want to have a lot of children? They will be economically penalized.

All young people should be outraged by these proposals. The members of this conference already have had their families; their decisions affect those preparing to have families. We are the ones who will not be given the right to choose our own family size.

Kerry Hanigan
junior
English