The Phyllis Schlafly Report

Billions to Be Lost in Super Bowl Gambling

By John and Andy Schlafly

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The embrace and promotion of gambling by the NFL make this Super Bowl week the worst of the year for those susceptible to being victimized. And next month features March Madness, when an estimated 68 million Americans bet on the annual college basketball tournament.

Many billions are wagered on the Super Bowl, basketball games, and nearly everything else. The easy availability of gambling on phone apps and the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to promote individualized betting have vastly expanded this vice far beyond the limited horse racing of a generation ago.

Young adults, and particularly young men, are the biggest victims, according to a survey released a few months ago by Fairleigh Dickinson University. It found that 10% of men and 7% of women between ages 18 and 30 have a gambling addiction today.

Gambling causes suicides and cognitive disorders even more than other addictions, including substance abuse. A study in Sweden found that gamblers were 15 times more likely to commit suicide than the overall population.

College basketball is particularly vulnerable to corruption by gambling, as players desperate for income can alter their performance to enable gamblers to win big by betting on aspects of a game. ESPN reported on Monday that three college basketball programs are under a federal investigation into gambling rings.

Major League Baseball fired its top balls-and-strikes umpire after his gambling app account was being used by someone else to place substantial bets on baseball. Los Angeles Dodgers star Shohei Ohtani's ex-interpreter faces federal sentencing for allegedly stealing $17 million to gamble and, while Ohtani himself was cleared, last year there was an NBA player who pled guilty to a scheme to depart games early with a phony injury and then an illness so that bets could win.

Delta Airlines recently announced its new partnership with DraftKings, a sports gambling company, to offer free gaming to passengers while in-flight. Apparently money will not be wagered through this program, but hooking idle travelers on this addiction can result.

Ever since the U.S. Supreme Court opened the floodgates to sports gambling in 2018, the sums wagered have increased. Missouri, through a ballot initiative, will soon join the 38 states plus Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico, that allow sports betting.

More people seek help for their gambling addiction at this time of year, during NFL playoffs through the Super Bowl, according to the executive director of the Council on Compulsive Gambling of Pennsylvania Josh Ercole. “A lot of this has to do with the ease of access and the continued increased availability,” he said, which has sharply increased through phone apps.

These bets are not merely on the outcome of a game, but throughout the game on predictions like what the next play will be or how well a particular player performs. “Prop wagers,” short for “proposition wagers,” are pervasive now in betting on sports.

A prop wager is a bet on something within a game, such as who scores the first touchdown or kicks the longest field goal. There are nearly endless varieties of prop bets promoted to someone using a gambling app during a game, and the potential for corruption with players, particularly unpaid ones at the college level, is severe.

The longtime NFL Commissioner who built the NFL into the world’s premier sports league was Pete Rozelle, a conservative and a big fan of Phyllis Schlafly. Rozelle banned NFL games on Christmas Day, and said in 1975 that “the NFL is firmly opposed to the concept of legalized gambling on professional football.”

That is not the NFL today, as it welcomes gambling to boost its television ratings among those who place bets. The NFL insists on playing on Christmas too, so this holy day has been transformed into a day of gambling for many.

The Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit may even allow gambling on election outcomes, in a case that was argued on January 17 captioned *KalshiEX v. CFTC*. The plaintiff seeks to offer trading in political event futures contracts, which the Commodity Futures Trading Commission so far prohibits under its interpretation of a federal statute.

Texas, which recently opened its biennial legislative session, has admirably resisted pressure to allow sports gambling in the Lone Star State. Texas also properly prohibits ballot initiatives like the one that gambling companies just passed in Missouri.

The revered longtime Mayor of New York City, Fiorello La Guardia, who built the Big Apple during the Great Depression, worked hard to keep gambling out and was even

photographed destroying slot machines with a sledgehammer. He dumped them into the river rather than allow harm from gambling.

Congress could and should prohibit sports betting, and has the authority to do so under the Commerce Clause. States, too, should prohibit sports betting as nearly a dozen have done.

John and Andy Schlafly are sons of Phyllis Schlafly (1924-2016) and lead the continuing Phyllis Schlafly Eagles organizations with writing and policy work.