

Alex Arvold

HF 778

I am writing today as a citizen concerned about the provisions of this bill. I would like to applaud Rep. Stephenson, first off, for putting in the effort to try and get this passed-I support the idea in principle, and myself and millions of other Minnesotans would love to be able to place a legal sports wager within the state. But this bill as written is seriously flawed.

As written, the bill amounts to little more than a multi, multi-million dollar handout for Mystic Lake and Treasure Island. As has been testified to through multiple committee stops already, there seems to be no legitimate policy reason to limit this expansion of gambling to the tribes only. As has been testified to through multiple committee stops already this bill as written is also likely to decimate the two racetracks in the state if they are excluded. I understand the Governor has indicated he is unlikely to support legislation not backed by the tribes, and I understand the unfortunate influence MIGA holds over many legislators in this state. If they or the Governor choose to hold up this expansion, so be it, they can answer for that. To pass this legislation as written however would be simply a continuation of decades of bad gambling policy in this state, and would not even benefit the tribes of greater Minnesota as much as it would benefit the metro-area tribes who have been the few to prosper from their existing monopoly over slot machines.

There is simply nothing within the gaming compacts of this state that requires the tribes be the only ones able to participate in legal sports betting. The only response Rep. Stephenson has had as to why this should be the case is that they are the “subject matter experts” in this area. How, Rep. Stephenson, are they the experts in a form of gambling they have NEVER offered in any capacity and have ALWAYS indicated prior to this they had no interest in? The argument is simply illogical. If we wish to truly have subject matter experts then the multi-national gambling corporations and sports betting corporations who are ALREADY providing expert sports betting services through many, many jurisdictions and venues deserve a seat at the table. I would like to see the licensing process include ALL interested parties, including any tribes who wish to participate, who must then all pay a licensing fee and meet additional qualifications as determined. Anything else is purely legislating winners and losers and is simply not what is best for the players or for the state.

This is simply the biggest of many issues with this bill. In addition, the reserve amount required by the operator is too low, the specifics of the offered bets are unclear, the tax rate is too low, the licensing fee is too low, and the allocation of funds is questionable at best. I am glad at the very least the bill has been amended to reflect the 21+ requirement. However if the bill is not amended to include additional parties as able to apply for licensure then there is no point in discussing the rest and if that is the case I'll respectfully ask you to vote no.

Thank you for your time.

