



## General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church

100 Maryland Ave. NE, Washington, DC 20002

June 6, 2007

Dear Members of the House Financial Services Committee:

On July 11, 2006, the House passed the Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act 317 to 93, reaffirming its commitment to protect American citizens by enforcing current law which prohibits gambling on the Internet. We cannot fathom that after less than a year, Members of Congress would reverse their position on Internet gambling after hearing compelling testimony and research which shows that people are much more susceptible to addiction from this form of gambling. This happens because often computers are set up in bedrooms or family rooms inside family homes or in college dorm rooms enabling one to gamble on the computer for hours on end with virtually no interruption. Just this week a news report pointed to organizers of Gamblers Anonymous and other addiction-prevention groups in Pennsylvania and New Jersey who say they are seeing many more teens in their meetings because of the rapid rise of online gambling in recent years. Quoted in the news report was the executive director of the Council on Compulsive Gambling of Pennsylvania who said, "These kids just have to punch in a credit card number, or are given access to their parents' credit cards. You have college kids using their college debit cards, which they're supposed to be using to buy books, to gamble online. It gets out of control real fast." (Philadelphia Inquirer, 6/7/07)

The United Methodist Church opposes H. R. 2046, *The Internet Regulation and Enforcement Act of 2007* on the following basis:

1. This bill would clearly enable expansion of a form gambling which is especially harmful and addictive. Though we would wish otherwise, there are already plenty of other forms of gambling from which people can choose. There is really no need to expand to another form of gambling.
2. We are particularly concerned with the rising number of young people, some of whom are underage who engage in Internet gambling and have become addicted to Internet gambling.
3. Internet Gambling businesses operate largely outside the United States and thus, are largely outside U.S. regulatory authority.

The United Methodist Church's position on gambling states that:

*Gambling is a menace to society, deadly to the best interests of moral, social, economic, and spiritual life, and destructive of good government. As an act of faith and concern, Christians should abstain from gambling and should strive to minister to those victimized by the practice.*

*Where gambling has become addictive, the Church will encourage such individuals to receive therapeutic assistance so that the individual's energies may be redirected into positive and constructive ends.*

*The Church should promote standards and personal lifestyles that would make unnecessary and undesirable the resort to commercial gambling as a recreation, as an escape, or as a means of producing public revenue or funds for support of charities or government.* (United Methodist Book of Discipline/Social Principle ¶163G)

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