

Oklahoma Doesn't Need Gambling

GAMBLING promoters are trying to stimulate a nationwide boom for their "business," as dilapidated Atlantic City tries to gear up to become a sort of "Las Vegas East."

Miami Beach, Massachusetts, California, New Orleans and other places have drives going to legalize gambling, hoping to revive fading resorts and collect more taxes.

Oklahoma, Texas and Arkansas are cited in a story in U.S. News & World Report as areas opposing the concept. That is an excellent reputation for us to have.

The gambling movement is being pushed so hard that some supporters are concerned that the saturation point may be reached and that casino gambling could fall flat by its own excesses.

Records show that net tax gains from legalized gambling seldom come up to promotional promises. However, law enforcement costs increase as riff-raff and organized crime move in.

According to Business Week magazine, the New Jersey Casino Control Commission is trying to

discourage organized crime by making all gambling financial sources and audit information public record.

"The Mafia has become very business-oriented," the article quotes a New Jersey banker. "They don't carry guns. They have MBAs (master of business administration degrees), and when they introduce themselves, they don't say they're from the Mafia."

Business Week reports that Las Vegas got much of its seed-money for gambling casinos from labor union pension funds. Gambling interests in New Jersey seem to be having some trouble borrowing money to build or renovate hotels for casinos.

One spokesman said: "When you look at the pecking order of available finances, it gets down to the Arabs and the Mafia."

Oklahoma apparently has a substantial amount of illegal gambling going on. Organized crime has been suspected of involvement, and football gambling reportedly is widespread.

The Internal Revenue Service recently advised Oklahomans involved in accepting bets to buy a \$500-a-year federal occupational tax stamp. Without it, they are subject to federal prosecution, and with it, they are subject to state prosecution, if caught.

Not every place is buying the gambling promotion. The Washington State Legislature turned down a proposal last year, with officials explaining: "We don't need money that badly."

The Newport, R.I., city council refused to allow a large mansion to be converted into a casino, saying it did not fit the image of a quality resort that the city was trying to project.

Gambling is not a pandemic obsession, as promoters try to make us believe. Oklahoma tourism promoters might do well to aim at attracting the millions of Americans who don't gamble and who prefer resorts not dedicated to booze and entertainment filth.

The Mafia doesn't fit into places without those things.