

**NEBRASKA COMMISSION ON PROBLEM GAMBLING
MEETING MINUTES
AUGUST 28th, 2026**

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m.

Roll Call: Present in person: Volnek, Leckband, Lutz, Moore, Monheiser and Gayer. Absent excused Zohner, and Lambert.

Announcements:

Chairperson Lutz made the following announcements:

The notice of this regularly scheduled meeting of the Commission on Problem Gambling was posted publicly on August 8th, on the State events calendar and on the website of the Gamblers Assistance Program. The notice of meeting with the agenda has been available continuously in the office of the Gamblers Assistance Program at 3401 Village Dr. Ste 100, Lincoln, Nebraska since the date when the notice was posted publicly. This meeting of the Commission on Problem Gambling is conducted in compliance with the requirements of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act. A copy of the Open Meetings Act is on the table in this room. Copies of other printed materials that may be considered by the Commission during the meeting are also available to the public on the table in this room. Public comments on issues presented during this meeting will be allowed by the chair from time to time during the meeting and may also be requested by any member of the commission at any time. The sequence of our discussion of agenda items and the timing of discussion are tentative and subject to ruling by the chair as this meeting goes on. Let us now pause for a moment of reflection before we move on to the next item on the agenda.

Approval of minutes of previous meetings:

The Chair called for amendments or corrections to the minutes of the meeting of May 8th, 2026. Commissioner Leckband moved to approve the minutes as distributed, seconded by Commissioner Moore. Hearing no objection, the Chair called for a vote. Voting aye, Commissioners Volnek, Leckband, Lutz, Moore, Monheiser. Voting nay, none. Motion passed.

Director Narrative Report: Legislation; Administrative Services Financial Reports; Operations and Data Reports.

The Director presented a series of reports about program activities, program finances and data. The director's narrative report is attached to these minutes. During discussion, Chairperson Lutz requested that Commissioner MonHeiser, Provisional Commissioner Gayer, and Marketing and Communications Specialist MacDonald work together regarding potential legislative considerations.

Agenda Item 6: New Provisional Counselor Certification

Cristina Pace, Grand Island. Commissioner Leckband moved approval of her application, seconded by Commissioner Volnek. After discussion the Chair called for a vote. Voting aye, Commissioners Volnek, Leckband, Lutz, Moore, Monheiser. Voting nay, none. Motion passed.

Agenda Item 7: Upgrade Provisional Certification from Provisional

Sandra Pasco-Armstrong, Auburn, Rayla Cooper, North Platte, Martinique Peters, Emerson, Eric Thomalia, Wahoo, and Shannon Bolter Omaha. Commissioner Moore moved approval of all the applications, seconded by Commissioner Leckband. After discussion the Chair called for a vote. Voting aye, Commissioners Volnek, Leckband, Lutz, Moore, Monheiser. Voting nay, none. Motion passed.

Agenda Item 8: Approve Fiscal 26-27 New Contracts

The Director requested the approval of the contracts effective July 1st for 29 counselors and 6 other service contracts requiring commission approval. Commissioner Leckband moved approval of all the contracts, seconded by Commissioner Volnek. Voting aye, Commissioners Volnek, Leckband, Lutz, Moore, Monheiser. Voting nay, none. Motion passed.

Agenda Item 9 and 10: New Fiscal Year messaging plan and State Colleges Initiative

Marketing and Communications specialist MacDonald and Provisional Commissioner Gayer spoke about plans to work with Argus, NORC(National Opinion Research Center) at the University of Chicago, and UNL to conduct market research to aid in more effective communication with the college age group. Specialist MacDonald also, spoke about partnerships with UNL, UNO and NEPA.

Agenda Item 11: Revision of Counselor Manual

The Director requested the approval of the proposal to revise part 3 of the counselor manual that would require client signature on the assessment record verifying client interaction. Commissioner Monheiser moved approval of the revisions, seconded by Commissioner Leckband. Voting aye, Commissioners Volnek, Leckband, Lutz, Moore, Monheiser. Voting nay, none. Motion passed.

Agenda Item 12: Review FY 27-29 Biennial Budget Proposal

The Director presented the FY 27-29 Biennial Budget proposal to the Commission for review.

Meeting adjourned at 12:30 a.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, November 6th, 2026, beginning at 9:30 a.m. at the offices of the Gamblers Assistance Program, 3400 Village Drive, Lincoln.

ATTEST: _____

Todd Zohner, Secretary

NEBRASKA COMMISSION ON PROBLEM GAMBLING

AUGUST 28, 2026

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

CURRENT EVENTS IN GAMBLING

- The petitions to amend the state constitution and allow sports betting by cell phone from anywhere in the state will be on the election ballot in November. Promoters needed to do this because the petition in 2020 required sports gamblers to stay inside the casino to bet. If the newest petition passes a gambler will be able to set up an account with a sports book at a casino and then bet on sports from outside the casino building. They will be able to go to a sports bar, watch the game and place their bets right from the barstool.

The initiative leaves many details up to the Legislature. So if the proposal wins, as expected, there will be a few bills on the subject in January.

- Prediction markets like Kalshi and Polymarket are stirring up controversy. Promoters argue that their “event” contracts are not gambling and therefore not to be regulated or taxed by states. Naturally, many states disagree and the lawsuits have begun. States have been in charge of gambling mainly because Congress doesn’t want to touch it. Now it appears that the Commodity Futures Trading Commission is taking over, with help from some clever money people and the Trump family.

These businesses offer the opportunity to wager on subjects like the number of people who will be on the payroll of Meta at some future date, or whether the price of gold will go up or down in the next 15 minutes. Big dollars involved. One source reported that **10.27 billion** prediction contracts involving **\$3.36 billion** in volume were handled by Kalshi and Polymarket **in one recent week**.

Kalshi claims that its business “harnesses the wisdom of the crowd” to make accurate predictions about important events. But consider a few facts – last Sunday 98.8% of Kalshi’s volume comprised sports bets (77.9%) and the ups and downs of crypto (20.9%). Gamblers can bet on the result of Wang Chuqin’s first match win at a World Table Tennis Smash Event, or the number of overtime periods in a Turkish basketball game. Not quite serious global affairs.

A study of Polymarket data concluded that the top 10% of gamblers accounted for 96% of the wins. Apparently the other 90% of the crowd is not that wise after all. This business model is headed for the U.S. Supreme Court.

- Another front in gambling involves the devices that we call “Gas Station Slot Machines.” Otherwise known in Nebraska as Mechanical Amusement Cash Devices.

About 6,000 of them are scattered around the state, in 308 cities and towns in 89 counties. Play is regulated by the Charitable Gaming Division of the Department of Revenue. Last session the Legislature enacted regulations including a 21-year-old age limit to play, allowing only four games per location and restricting advertising and game designs.

Tax on the gross profit collected by the operators was 5% last fiscal year and increased to 10% this year. The tax is divided among a list of recipients. Gamblers Assistance received \$203,852 from the first year, July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026. This was at the 5% rate. Doubling the tax rate may double our share of the proceeds.

We disagree with the Department of Revenue’s calculation of the tax, which we believe collected 18% less than the law requires -- about \$1.7 million less in the first year. This made a difference of about \$40,000 to Gamblers Assistance.

The shortfall, if there is one, also affects the other entities that receive the proceeds: the Property Tax Credit Cash Fund, Counties and Cities where the devices are located, the Charitable Gaming Operations Fund, the Nebraska Tourism Commission, and the State General Fund.

Play on these devices is affecting a lot of people, almost 40% of our new clients this past year, surpassing all other forms of gambling as a cause of problems.

GAMBLERS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM NEWS

Today’s agenda includes the usual financial reports, approval of certifications and contracts, and reports on staff activities. Here are some highlights:

- August in the even-numbered years is the time for renewal of all counselor certificates. They submit applications for renewal with proof of continuing education. All certificates expire on August 31; all counselors are required to attend 24 hours of continuing education during the two-year duration of their certificates,

except those who just finished training last year. We will reissue 50-60 certificates after all the paperwork is processed.

- The even-numbered year is also the time for preparation of the biennial budget request. This process requires completion of several forms outlining agency programs and spending, and proposals for appropriations changes, up or down. Preliminary documents are included in item 12 of today's materials.
- Today the Commission welcomes Jon Gayer, our newest Commissioner recently appointed by Governor Pillen to fill the vacancy left by John Pulverenti. Jon's term lasts until March 1, 2028. Commissioners Moore and Lambert were reappointed for three-year terms that officially began on March 1, 2026. All three will be submitted to the Legislature for confirmation next year, leaving one vacancy (lawyer) which we hope will be filled soon.
- Last month Governor Pillen directed all state agencies to submit plans to cut spending by 5% this year. The Budget Director required agencies to project month-by-month spending. Our version is in the materials distributed for item 4 on today's agenda. The Budget Director restrains spending by limiting the amount of cash allotted to each agency; our spending in the first two months has been within our allotment. We cannot predict with certainty what will happen with counseling demand or our revenue, which means that both sides of our fiscal equation must be watched continuously.
- We have started collaborating with Racing & Gaming Commission staff on voluntary self-exclusion and responsible and safe gaming policies. First steps include getting better acquainted and gathering what little evidence there is to guide us. We expect to demonstrate progress at later Commission meetings.
- Our new Commissioner Jon Gayer is very active in the Nebraska Collegiate Prevention Alliance, an association of 26 colleges and universities. Until recently the Alliance has focused on student abuse of substances; Jon's interest in gambling has broadened the scope of the Alliance's activities. The Commission will hear about some of that at today's meeting, with more to come.
- Jessica and I attended the Midwest Conference on Problem Gambling and Substance Abuse in June, held this year in Blue Springs, Missouri. Jon Gayer moderated a panel discussion about sports betting. This was the 23rd year of the Conference, which is the only remaining regional conference in the U.S.
- In July I attended the annual conference of the National Council on Problem Gambling in Nashville. I met Michael Wohl, a psychologist from Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. Dr. Wohl has agreed to help develop responsible gaming ideas for Nebraska. I plan to invite him to present a webinar on this topic.

- I also met Logan Davis and Cindy Clouner, from the Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Drug Misuse Prevention and Recovery, at Ohio State University. They have developed a program focusing on harm prevention among college student gamblers, another topic we will address this year. They demonstrated a method they created to facilitate discussion with college students about gambling. And in the course of that demonstration showed the audience a map of states where their ideas are catching on. Including Nebraska, which is high on their list of participants. This led to a nice conversation with praise for Jon Gayer's interactions with them. Our newest Commissioner has broken through on the national scene.
- We have just started working with Argus on ideas for this year. Jessica will describe plans and progress.
- A reminder copy of this year's Commission budget is attached.

David Geier

August 28, 2026

GAMBLERS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM BUDGET FISCAL YEAR 2026-2027

UPDATED 07/07/26

REVENUE

Share of State Lottery profits <i>500,000 + 1%; Constitution Article III Section 24</i>	900,000
5% of State Lottery ad budget <i>Statute Section 9-831</i>	300,000
Share of Casino Wagering Tax <i>Racetrack Gaming Act Section 9-1204</i>	1,600,000
Share of MACD Gaming Tax	400,000
Investment Income <i>Gamblers Assistance Fund earnings</i>	<u>15,000</u>
TOTAL PROJECTED REVENUE	<u>3,215,000</u>

EXPENDITURES

510000 PERSONAL SERVICES

511100 PERMANENT SALARIES <i>Limit set by Legislature</i>	154,334
515100 RETIREMENT PLANS EXPENSE <i>Employer share 7.5%</i>	11,575
515200 FICA EXPENSE <i>Employer share 7.65%</i>	11,807
515500 HEALTH INSURANCE EXPENSE <i>Employer share of premiums</i>	46,000
516500 WORKERS COMP PREMIUMS <i>State assessment</i>	<u>1,000</u>
Personal Services Total	224,716

520000 OPERATING EXPENSES

521100 POSTAGE EXPENSE	150
521400 CIO CHARGES <i>State data; communications</i>	10,000
521500 PUBLICATION & PRINT EXPENSE <i>State printing</i>	2,000
522200 CONFERENCE REGISTRATION <i>National Conference</i>	1,500
531100 OFFICE SUPPLIES EXPENSE	750
534600 EDUCATIONAL SUPPLIES <i>Texts, manuals</i>	500
541100 ACCTG & AUDITING SERVICES	5,000
541200 PURCHASING ASSESSMENT	400
554130 VIDEO SERVICES <i>Zoom Video</i>	7,250

554900 OTHER CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	
<i>Data analyst</i>	82,400
<i>Helpline service</i>	34,000
559100 OTHER OPERATING EXPENSE	
<i>Midwest Conference sponsorship</i>	5,000
559164 PROBLEM GAMBLING MESSAGES RFP Awarded Contract	<u>350,000</u>
Operating Expenses Total	498,950
570000 TRAVEL EXPENSES	
571100 BOARD & LODGING <i>Commissioner travel; Hotels/2 conferences</i>	3,500
572100 COMMERCIAL TRANSPORT <i>National Conference air fare</i>	750
573100 STATE-OWNED TRANSPORT	1,000
574500 PERSONAL VEHICLE MILEAGE <i>Commissioner, staff travel .70/mile</i>	<u>1,500</u>
Travel Expenses Total	6,750
544300 PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES	
544300 PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES <i>Counseling services</i>	<u>2,303,250</u>
<i>Assumes total 13,000 hours counseling + 425 new client assessments:</i>	
1,300 SBI @ 160	208,000
11,700 OP @ 170	1,989,000
425 Assess. @ 250	106,250
TOTAL	2,303,250
TOTAL ALL PROJECTED EXPENDITURES	<u>3,033,666</u>
APPROPRIATION	<u>3,217,273</u>
CASH FUND STATUS	
BALANCE 07/01/26	918,902
PLUS PROJECTED REVENUE FYE26-27	+ <u>3,215,000</u>
TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE FY26-27	4,133,902
MINUS PROJECTED EXPENDITURES FY26-27	- <u>3,033,666</u>
PROJECTED BALANCE 06/30/27	<u>1,100,236</u>