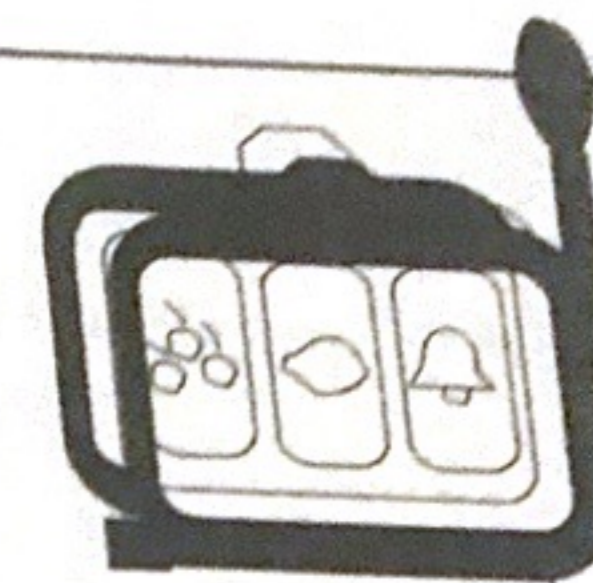


Video Gambling's Impact

by "Stella," an Addicted Video Gambler



You're pulling up to get gasoline when you notice a woman in the SUV next to you having a fit in her car. It captures your attention. She is sitting in there alone, screaming, crying and hitting the steering wheel. She is having a meltdown. She just withdrew all the money in her checking account that was meant for groceries and bills, along with cash advancing two credit cards to the max of \$2,200... in the last three hours... inside that very gas station... Again. That lady was me, and I'm not alone.

I had a gambling addiction that kicked off at age 23. I was addicted to slot machines. At age 30, I realized my inability to control this impulse was going to be my demise and voluntarily "self-excluded" from casinos in Illinois. Since the good ole slots-o-plenty came to town, allowing gambling machines outside casinos, the gloves are back off. There are no safeguards in place to help keep problem gamblers from these machines, and most places don't even card to make sure people "playing" are of legal age. Illinois has one thing in mind with these machines, and I'm here to tell you, it is not Amusement. It is Money.

Many people will never know the extreme anguish and devastation these machines can bring into someone's life. But with the abundance of machines seemingly around every corner, more and more people will find out. If not directly, a spouse, child, neighbor, employee or friend likely will. Slot machines are not harmless games for adults. There is a lot of science that goes into their engineering, the science of psychology – how to psychologically addict the player. What could be better for government coffers than another taxable addiction?

This addiction makes zero sense to the person who is addicted. Once I realized there was a problem, I was still in trouble. I simply could not stop – for over a decade. It's like being possessed by a demon of the mind. I couldn't understand it.

I read every book on the subject I could get my hands on, joined online support groups, listened to podcasts, cut up credit and debit cards, and got white knuckled many days trying to make sense of why I kept doing something that caused me so much financial and mental harm.

This mind trap addiction becomes an all-

consuming urge to play more and more and more. When you are an addict, it is not about the money. It is about playing. Pushing the button again and again and again is what it is all about. The financial ruin is just a by product.

When you hear the state's rebuttal that there will be money spent on "programs" and "addiction counseling," that is lip service. I write this as testimony to what it feels like to be an addicted gambler, and to express my gratitude to ILCAAAP for trying to deliver this message to Illinois lawmakers. They need to hear this voice.

40 Million

in U.S. Had a Substance Use Disorder in 2020

SAMHSA annual National Survey
on Drug Use and Health