

Written by Administrator
Wednesday, 12 January 2011 02:10 -

If suckers are going to gamble away their paychecks anyway, Pennsylvania officials might as well help them save some money on gas and bridge tolls - while also raking off a share of their losses for tax relief.

That in

effect was Gov. Rendell's defense of the state's aggressive foray into casino gambling during his appearance Sunday on CBS's *60 Minutes* program.

The interview made for banner headlines due to Rendell's brief explosion, in which he chastised interviewer Lesley Stahl and the show's producers as "idiots" and "simpletons" for not grasping the wisdom of his point of view on gambling.

His contention was that gamblers living in the Keystone State were traveling to Atlantic City and other gaming venues, so it made sense to open casinos closer to home to capture some of that business.

"You're not getting it," Rendell said, growing more and more perturbed. "Those people would lose that money anyway. Don't you understand? You guys don't get that. You're simpletons. You're idiots if you don't get that."

Indeed, the state's 10 casinos are grabbing business from Atlantic City. Revenues were up again in December, while the Shore casinos continue to face disappointing returns. At the same time, Pennsylvania's casinos have provided the state new revenue to offer meaningful tax relief to residents across the state, whether gamblers or not.

But it's a stretch for Rendell to portray the homegrown casinos almost as a benign convenience. Stringing casinos from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh is about more than just moving the craps tables closer to where gamblers live. It represents a major expansion of gambling, which likely is creating substantial numbers of new casino customers. That's a bigger pool of citizens who, indeed, may be losing their paychecks - and that's hardly a public good.

So the governor downplays the negative impact of the state's gambling habit in saying "let's get the upside" of gambling by letting people play the slots without using E-ZPass. With more gamblers in the hunt for that illusive quick buck, the downsides of problem gambling, crime, and other social pathologies are just as likely to grow while the state gets its take.

Inquirer Editorial: More gambling, more losers - Philadelphia Inquirer

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That should be simple enough to understand.

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