Kulongoski proclaims March 3-9 Problem Gambling Awareness Week

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Recognizing that problem gambling is a significant public health issue that affects thousands of Oregonians of all ages and backgrounds, Gov. Ted Kulongoski has proclaimed March 3-9 as Problem Gambling Awareness Week.As noted in the proclamation, Oregon is dedicated to reducing the serious personal, social, health and financial costs attributed to problem gambling through balanced policies and effective problem gambling services. "Thousands of Oregonians have successfully sought treatment, are in recovery with their families, and have benefited from the expertise of professionals in the treatment field who have dedicated their lives to helping people recover from problem gambling," Kulongoski said in the proclamation. More than 2,300 persons received treatment for problem gambling in 28 regional and statewide service programs during fiscal year 2006-2007, according to the Oregon Department of Human Services Addictions and Mental Health Division. According to a recent survey approximately 53 percent of individuals in treatment are women. The average age of survey participants was 46 years old, and half worked full time. The average gambling-related debt was $26,099, although 91clients reported gambling debts of $100,000 and 25 had debts of $250,000 or more. Problem gambling treatment is successful for many people. Six months after completing treatment approximately 60 percent of participants said they no longer gambled. A television and print advertising campaign will begin during Problem Gambling Awareness Week featuring several Oregonians talking about someone close who received help for their gambling problem through treatment. Billboards also will carry the message. "We applaud Gov. Kulongoski's leadership in raising awareness of the negative impact of problem gambling on thousands of Oregonians," said Paul D. Potter, AMH problem gambling services manager. Potter said more information, including the 2008 Community Resource Guide on Problem Gambling, is available on the DHS Web site at www.oregon.gov/DHS/addiction/gambling.shtml#aware.