

**SPECIAL SUBCOMMITTEES  
OF THE  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GENERAL LAWS  
*AND THE*  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON GENERAL LAWS AND  
TECHNOLOGY  
STUDYING CHARITABLE GAMING LAWS**

**Public Hearings on Charitable Gaming**

**Staff Report**

**Conduct of the Public Hearings**

Three public hearings were conducted to obtain comments and suggestions from all aspects of the charitable gaming community in Virginia. The hearings were publicized through a press release sent to the House General Laws and Senate General Laws and Technology email lists. In addition the notice was posted on the Special Subcommittees' website. Staff also contacted the Division of Charitable Gaming (DCG) for assistance in publicizing the hearings.

The hearings averaged a little over two hours in duration. They were conducted in three regions of the state-Northern Virginia (Annandale), Tidewater (Norfolk) and South Western Virginia (Roanoke)- to provide an opportunity for obtaining comments from a broader spectrum of Virginia residents, charitable gaming organizations and other entities involved with charitable gaming. A combined total of 87 people attended the three public hearings. All comments were transcribed and will be a part of the study record. While organizations that conduct charitable gaming were well represented, other sectors were not as well represented including the charitable entities that benefit from the gaming operations and individuals who participate by playing the games.

For each hearing, upon the completion of public comment, staff established a "town hall" atmosphere to generate a more general and relaxed discussion on how charitable gaming is conducted in the state. These discussions were instrumental in developing consensus on some issues and to generate several suggestions for legislative changes. In addition, the presence of DCG staff at each hearing was extremely helpful in terms of answering specific questions regarding the agency's processes and regulatory practices and moved towards developing a dialogue with the charitable gaming community.

## Summary of Consensus Comments

Over the course of the public hearings there were several themes that appeared with some consistency and around which some consensus developed.

**1. General objection to increasing the regular per-game bingo prize amount from \$100 to \$250.** *(Note: one organization did indicate some support for raising prize amounts citing competition with a neighboring state.)*

### Discussion:

- Smaller organizations administering smaller games will have to charge more to play
- An increase in the cost to play will result in fewer players thereby decreasing the earnings available to support charitable causes
- Difficulty in getting enough volunteer workers to provide support for the games

**2. General agreement that the paperwork involved with (i) obtaining a permit, and (ii) maintaining a permit is too complicated.**

### Discussion:

- It takes too much time to complete paperwork; smaller organizations are already pressed for time commitment from volunteers
- Forms should be revised with aim towards simplification and ease of use while still gathering pertinent information
- Forms could also be modified to serve dual purposes
- Change the reconciliation form to indicate more than just whether money is missing, but also to indicate profit and loss per session

**3. General objection to increasing the number of gaming nights from two nights to four nights per week.**

### Discussion:

- Currently it is extremely difficult to obtain volunteers to cover two nights per week; additional nights will increase pressure on volunteer time
- Would increase the pressure on smaller organizations and organizations who do not own the building in which they conduct gaming

**4. General agreement to decrease the amount of time between gaming sessions from one hour to 1/2 hour.**

**Discussion:**

- May increase revenue by decreasing the number of players who leave between sessions
- Would assist the flow of the games
- Reduces expenses (security, lights, etc.)
- May result in easing pressure on volunteers working the games

**5. General agreement to use innovation to make the games more exciting.**

**Discussion:**

- Use of shaded paper
- Use of bingo game based on poker
- Regulatory flexibility

### **Summary of Legislative Suggestions**

Over the course of the public hearings there were also several specific suggestions made regarding legislation or changes that would require legislative action to implement.

**1. Establish the Division of Charitable Gaming as a special fund agency similar to state entities charged with regulating professions and occupations. This would allow DVG to use permit and audit fees to directly support the agency's operations and provide enhanced service and support to permit holders.**

**2. Review 10 ten percent threshold to ensure that it adequately includes all expenses related to gaming and makes appropriate allowance for the size of the operation and whether the organization owns or rents the gaming location.**

**3. Remove Winner-Take-All games and instead increase the number of Lucky 7-type games from one to three per night and allow the each game to start at \$1,000 rather than the current \$500.**

**4. Allow two \$500 jackpot games rather than one \$1,000 jackpot game.**

**Overview of  
Charitable Gaming Public Hearings  
August 24, 25, and September 3, 2009**

Site	Attendees	Organizations Represented
<p><b>Annandale, Virginia</b></p> <p>Northern Virginia Community College, Richard J. Ernst Cultural Center Monday- August 24, 2009</p>	<p><b>31</b></p>	<p>Virginia Charitable Bingo Association Franconia Volunteer Fire Department Manassas Elks Lodge Arlington-Fairfax Elks Lodge Virginia Bingo Group Front Royal Elks Lodge Front Royal Moose Lodge Owl Volunteer Fire Department Annandale Volunteer Fire Department Division of Charitable Gaming</p>
<p><b>Roanoke, Virginia</b></p> <p>Virginia Western Community College, Whitman Auditorium Tuesday- August 25, 2009</p>	<p><b>24</b></p>	<p>Roanoke Moose Lodge Virginia State Firefighters Association Virginia Elks Association Melrose Athletic Club Virginia Charitable Bingo Association Division of Charitable Gaming</p>
<p><b>Norfolk, Virginia</b></p> <p>Tidewater Community College, Jeanne &amp; George Roper Performing Arts Center Thursday- September 3, 2009</p>	<p><b>32</b></p>	<p>The Marching Elites Knights of Columbus-Council 511 Aragona Pembroke Little League Virginia Bingo Group Virginia Moose Lodge 898 Virginia Elks Association Virginia Charitable Bingo Association Virginia State Firefighters Association Bingo Hall Owner (an individual) Division of Charitable Gaming</p>