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A STATEMENT OF THE COUNCIL OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF METROPOLITAN CHICAGO OPPOSING THE EXPANSION OF VIDEO GAMBLING IN THE CITY OF CHICAGO

February 23, 2010

The Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago reaffirms its position that the continued spread of gambling is poor public policy and an inadequate response to the needs of the community. Gambling is regressive in its economic effect, morally repugnant to many, and is demonstrably harmful to a growing number of individuals and families. Whatever benefit may derive from the spread of gambling in Chicago and the State of Illinois will be far outweighed by its negative and debilitating effect upon our community and our private lives.

Those words conclude a statement by the Council of Religious Leaders in opposition to the expansion of state sanctioned gambling in the Chicago Metropolitan Area. Originally written in August, 1993, they still summarize the position of our Council in February, 2010.

It is the studied position of the members of the Council that the proposal to add widespread Video Gambling to what is already a vast assortment of gaming opportunities is ill advised and detrimental to the well being of Chicago's citizens. We commend the diligent efforts of Rev. Philip Blackwell, Senior Pastor of First United Methodist Church at Chicago City Temple, and others in highlighting the troubling reliance by some community leaders and legislators on gambling revenues as a band-aid solution to our deep and pressing economic needs. The far-reaching damage to individuals, families and to the common good far exceeds any benefit that additional gambling revenues might provide.

We, therefore, join in asking that any consideration of the ordinance to amend Chapter 8-12-010 of the Municipal Code be openly and completely reviewed by the License Committee of the City Council, with public hearings in each of the city's wards. If such an ordinance were regrettably to come before the Council, we urge that the aldermen seriously consider the underlying facts and resultant community and social impact of Video Gambling, and that provision be made for public testimony in order that those in opposition may be fully heard.