



GAMBLING

Social Criteria Investment Screen

AUTHORITY

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has laid out its concern for the shared stewardship of health in *Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor* (2003) and considers social environment to be part of health. The ELCA's social statements are in accord that profitability of an economic pursuit, such as gambling, must be put into the context of what is good for the neighbor.¹ The ELCA supports alternatives to gambling as a means of community development, calling instead for development that takes into account the overall health and welfare of a community's people.

In "Gambling and the Public Good" (ALC, 1984) the American Lutheran Church (ALC), a predecessor church body to the ELCA, expresses concern for the possible harmful impact of legalized gambling, rooted in three distinct claims:

- It tends to extract revenues from those least able to afford it.
- It diverts family and personal income.
- It contributes to the brokenness of individuals and social systems.

WORDING OF SCREEN

The ELCA recommends no investment in firms involved in the production or marketing of offerings of gambling opportunities.

DEFINITION OF PROBLEM

The ALC statement describes gambling as involving three elements: (1) a valuable consideration, mutually risked in the hope of (2) winning a significant prize, which is awarded (3) dependent largely on the caprice of chance.

Gambling is associated with a multitude of ills, from substance abuse and mental illness to domestic violence, and raises strong concerns about harm to public health.² From the perspective of ELCA social teaching, the disproportionate

1 A 2007 social policy resolution on the sponsorship of gaming by American Indian tribes explores some ways in which American Indian gaming differs, both in terms of tribal sovereignty, and in that American Indian tribes, having been removed from their lands and livelihoods, have limited means of raising revenue.

2 <http://www.who.int/docs/default-source/substance-use/the-epidemiology-and-impact-of-gambling-disorder-and-other-gambling-relate-harm.pdf>

Corporate Social Responsibility in the ELCA uses the tools of screening of investments, shareholder advocacy and community investing to work with corporations, calling them to ensure that people are treated fairly and with dignity and to create sustainable communities.

More at ELCA.org/CSR.

effect on low-income communities is especially concerning. Online gambling has changed the landscape of the industry, making it more accessible and, therefore, potentially more harmful to the common good.

Because various investors will implement this along a continuum, this screen might include as investors any companies having revenue from owning, managing or operating gambling establishments. Companies to be reviewed are those involved in supplying key component elements and services to the gambling industry (casinos, betting operations, bingo games, state-run lotteries, online gambling and gambling devices such as roulette wheels).

SOCIAL POLICY AND STUDIES

[*Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor*](#) (ELCA, 2003)

“[Gambling](#)” (ELCA, 1998)

“[Gambling and the Public Good](#)” (ALC, 1984)

ELCA social policy resolution, “[The Sponsorship of Legal Gaming by American Indian Tribes](#)” (CC 6 approved, November 2007)

[*Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All*](#) (ELCA, 1999)

[*Genetics, Faith and Responsibility*](#) (ELCA, 2011)

APPROVED by the ELCA Church Council, April 21-23, 1990

UPDATED by the Advisory Committee on Corporate Social Responsibility, May 6, 2008

APPROVED by the ELCA Church Council, November 2008 [CC08.11.57a]

APPROVED by the ELCA Church Council, November 2016 [CC16.11.46n]

UPDATED by Corporate Social Responsibility Review Team, June 8, 2020

UPDATED by Corporate Social Responsibility Review Team, June 27, 2023

APPROVED by Church Council, November 2023 [CC23.11.20]