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September 3, 1996

On August 3, 1996, the "National Gambling Impact and Policy Commission Act" became a reality when President Clinton signed the Act into law. This Act established a nine-member federal commission whose task is to conduct a two-year study on the impact of gambling in the United States. More specifically, the Act requires the Commission "to conduct a comprehensive legal and factual study of the social and economic impacts of gambling in the United States."* The Commission will focus on the following six distinct areas of concern:**

1. "Review existing federal, state, local, and Native American tribal government policies and practices with respect to the legalization or prohibition of gambling, including a review of the costs of such policies and practices."*
2. Study the relationship between gambling and crime, analyzing existing reinforcement and regulatory practices that seek to address such a relationship.
3. Assess "pathological or problem gambling, including its impact on individuals, families, businesses, social institutions, and the economy."*
4. Review the general impact of gambling on society, including the role of advertising and the impact of gambling on depressed economic areas.
5. Assess the extent to which gambling provides revenue to government, and the extent to which alternative revenue sources exist.
6. Study the "interstate and international effects of gambling by electronic means, including the use of interactive technologies and the Internet."*

The Commission will have the authority to hold hearings, administer oaths, hear testimony, receive evidence, employ an executive director and staff, and contract with outside research organizations. For example, the Commission is required to contract with the National Research Council, which will study pathological gambling. The Commission will not, however, have the authority to order witnesses to testify before it. Nevertheless, once the Commission gives the U.S. Department of Justice 10 days notice, it can subpoena, by majority vote, any person who fails to supply requested written, recorded or computerized

information or documents. Once subpoenaed, these individuals may be required to respond to interrogatories that the Commission finds necessary to understand any subpoenaed materials. Confidential information obtained by the Commission will be protected by law.**

Sources:

*National Gambling Impact and Policy Commission Act of 1996, Pub. L. No. 104-169

**Adapted from: President signs bill establishing gambling commission. (1996, July/August). National Association of Attorneys General Gaming Developments Bulletin, pp. 1-2.

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