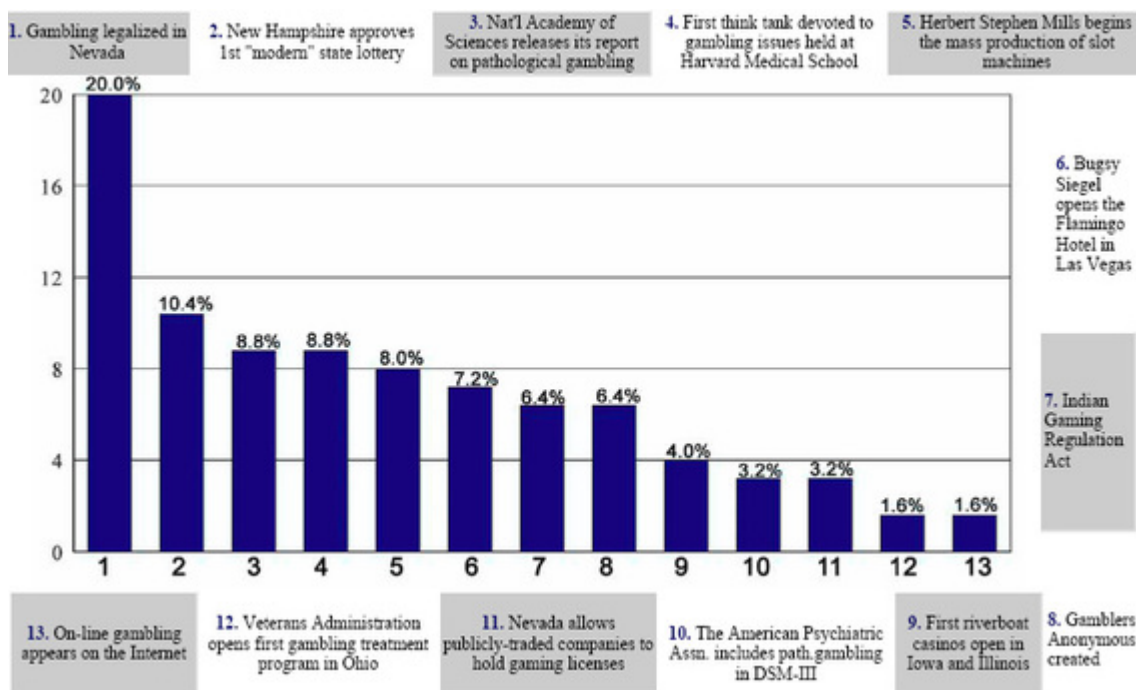


The WAGER Vol. 5(5) - Talking Back: Readers Choose the Gambling-Related Event of the Century

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In the last WAGER of the former millennium, we posed a question to our readers: "In your opinion, which of the following events has had the greatest impact on gambling and its consequences during the last 100 years?" Now that Y2K has come and gone, we are pleased to present the results in the figure below.



In first and second place, respectively, are the legalization of gambling in Nevada and the establishment of the New Hampshire state lottery. It is not surprising that these events were heavily endorsed; both represent the beginning of the end of prohibition-based public policy. The third and fourth most popular choices, however, were somewhat unexpected. One might expect that the National Academy of Sciences report and the Harvard think tank would be events of limited interest to non-scientists. That they were so heavily endorsed demonstrates that their appeal may extend beyond the scientific community.

But looking at the events that received the most votes tells only half of the story.

Equally interesting are the events which received only one vote or none at all. The founding of Alcoholics Anonymous received no votes, even though it provided the model on which Gamblers Anonymous was later based.

Gambling-related organizations did not fare well in the poll. Only one vote was cast for the founding of the gaming industry's lobbying body, the American Gaming Association (AGA). The nation's largest anti-gambling organization fared no better; the creation of the National Coalition Against Legalized Gambling (NCALG) received only one vote, as did the National Council on Problem Gambling. Does this reflect a diminished valuation for organizations as we enter the new century? It may take another WAGER survey sometime in the future to evaluate this question.

Of course, the methodology used for the WAGER survey is hardly rigorous. Thus, readers are advised to consider the results for what they really are: a quasi-scientific look back at 100 years in the history of gambling.