

Summary of “What’s at Stake” Deliberative Dialogue Process

What’s at Stake Dialogue at a Glance:

- WAS goals:
 - To gather broad citizen input to inform the policy question of whether or not to expand legalized gambling in NH on behalf of the Governor’s Commission.
 - To demonstrate a different way of soliciting input, beyond the traditional forms of public hearings and opinion polls.
- Recap of sites:
 - Dialogues were held at eleven sites across the state: Berlin, Concord, Conway, Keene, Laconia, Lebanon, Littleton, Manchester, Portsmouth, Rochester, and Salem.
 - Nineteen discussion groups were held, engaging a total of 221 participants
 - 275 participants participated in the on-line forum moderated by e-Democracy
- Financial support was provided by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

Common Themes Emerging from the *What’s at Stake* Dialogue:

1. There is broad recognition that there is a need for alternative revenue sources given the state’s current budget deficit.
2. The need for economic development in certain parts of state appears to influence peoples’ views on the benefits and risks of expanded gambling.
3. There is broad recognition that expanded gambling could impact community infrastructure (fire, roads, etc.) and that there needs to be a mechanism to address these impacts if gambling is expanded.
4. There is degree of consensus that expanded gambling could impact pathological behaviors. The disagreement is over who should be held responsible (i.e. the individual or local/state government).
5. The decision to expand gambling should be consistent with the NH way (i.e. our penchant for personal choice) and some suggest that it would be hypocritical not to allow it.
6. There is a need for objective information on the effects of expanded gambling on state/local revenue, economic development, infrastructure, social services, pathological behaviors, crime, etc.

Key ‘Take-Aways’ from the *What’s at Stake* Process:

- There was a degree of consensus that it is more important to consider *how* to go about expanding gambling, than it is about whether or not to expand. We *already* have legalized gambling.
- There is a lot behind peoples’ views that is nuanced, even within the ‘for’ and ‘against’ camps.
- People may change their perceptions and concerns (though not necessarily their position) as a result of dialogue or after receiving credible information. By its nature, deliberation is an iterative process.
- Whether for or against expanded gambling, participants agreed on 3 tenets that should be considered in the decision-making process: maintaining good jobs, quality of life, and a vital economy.