

Rep. Emanuel Cleaver, II
House Financial Services Subcommittee on Housing Hearing
“Can Internet Gambling Be Effectively Regulated to Protect Consumers and the
Payment System?”
Friday, June 8, 2007

Comments

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, thank you for scheduling today’s hearing on internet gambling. I recall our Committee’s lively debate last year as we considered legislation to address unlawful internet gambling. We grappled with the desire of some to impose their values on others against our fundamental rights of free speech, association, and the “pursuit of liberty” as individuals chose their pursuits. Notwithstanding my real job, as an ordained minister, I do not believe Congress should attempt to legislate morals as a policy or as a practice.

However, where there is a long-standing public policy interest in regulating activities that can harm our society, such as illegal gambling, then there is an appropriate federal legislative role to provide an effective enforcement mechanism. That is why I voted last year to support passage of the Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act, which represented 10 year’s worth of hard work to finally reach a compromise among a multitude of competing interests that was able to pass both chambers and be signed into law. Therefore, I hope we carefully and cautiously weigh all the competing interests and issues before we make any changes to law we just enacted last year.

I thank the witnesses for sharing their time and insights with us today and I look forward to your testimony.