



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

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Maryland Slots Referendum

On November 4, Maryland voters will participate in a referendum to decide whether or not the state Constitution should be amended to allow 15,000 slot machines (video lottery terminals) at five locations in the state. UU congregations may want to support or oppose the referendum, or educate themselves and others on the issue. The text of the ballot question follows:

Question 2: Authorizing video lottery terminals (slot machines) to fund education

Authorizes the state to issue up to five video lottery licenses for the primary purpose of raising revenue for education of children in public schools, prekindergarten through grade 12, public school construction and improvements, and construction of capital projects at community colleges and higher education institutions. No more than a total number of 15,000 video lottery terminals may be authorized in the state, and only one license may be issued for each specified location in Anne Arundel, Cecil, Worcester, and Allegany Counties and Baltimore City. Any additional forms or expansion of commercial gaming in Maryland is prohibited, unless approved by a voter referendum.

The UU Legislative Ministry of Maryland (UULM-MD) adopted a number of guidelines for fiscal issues in November 2007. The following section is relevant to the slots debate:

UULM-MD recognizes that several of its priority issues require expenditure of state funds and thus are tied to fiscal decisions. These taxation and budget decisions involve for UUs serious moral and social justice issues. UUs can express our values by advocating what we believe to be the characteristics of a fair and socially-just revenue-producing system, as described below.

--We are concerned about the use of slot machines to balance the budget, especially considering their negative consequences such as the exploitation of people with lower incomes, gambling addiction, and social deterioration.

Arguments for slots

- Slots will raise an estimated \$90 million in FY 2010 and \$450 million in following years for the state budget.
- If slots are not approved, the state will have to raise taxes or cut funding of critical services. Housing, food, energy, costs of government, and social needs may be affected.
- The state will dedicate 48.5% to 51% of total annual gross slots revenues to the Education Trust Fund.
- Without slots, there may be an impact on the most recent increases of funding for Medicaid expansion, higher education, and the Chesapeake Bay.

For more information: For Maryland For Our Future: <http://www.formaryland.org>

Arguments against slots

- Slots will not remedy Maryland's economic problems; they will add to them through the increased social costs of addiction, bankruptcy, and crime.
- Slots will not yield as much revenue as expected, due to the weak economy. They will not solve the budget problem or reduce taxes.
- Slots are bad for small business, as they redistribute current spending instead of creating new spending.
- Slots are a regressive tax on the poor. Slots players are largely female, seniors on fixed incomes, and members of the lower and middle classes.

For more information: Marylanders United to Stop Slots: <http://www.marylandersunited.com>

How congregations can get involved

Congregations may educate and/or advocate for and/or against the slots referendum. However, any advocacy activity must not be a substantial part of a congregation's activity (generally recognized as less than 5% of total money, staff, and volunteer time that goes into running an organization). Religious organizations may never engage in partisan political activity—advocating for or against candidates for public office or political parties.

For more information: UUA Real Rules: <http://www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/rearules/index.shtml>

For an objective "Regular Person's Guide to the Maryland Slot Machine Referendum" from the Maryland Budget and Tax Policy Institute, go to www.mdpolicy.org.