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Is a lottery a good idea?

Since the emergence of mankind there is evidence that humans engaged in games of luck; that is they gambled (Vacek). It is clear that there is something in human beings very nature that makes them interested in games of chance. Dating back nearly as long as the presence of gambling has been documented arguments as to why it should be forbidden or made illegal. The argument against gambling is pretty straight forward: it leads to bad outcomes. Gambling is associated with alcohol use, drug use, suicides and bankruptcy. Mark Twain once said, "*The best throw at dice is to throw them away*", as Twain himself struggled with a gambling addiction at points in his life. Twain saw how cruel the addiction to gambling could be. There are plenty of stories of people losing all their families income to the point where they are no longer able to look after their kids. Thus, gambling is seen as a drain on the social welfare system. With that said the lottery seems to be the most benign form of gambling. It seems to be a harmless loss of a few bucks for the dream of winning.

However many think the lottery is just a slippery slope or a gateway to more serious gambling. If gambling is bad in part, then it must be bad in the whole. Clearly the argument has a lot of force as the existence of a lottery has been a contested debate in the US. Consider, for example, a recent article in Forbes magazine entitled Why Can't You Buy Your \$640 Million Lottery Ticket Online?(Vardi). The article covers the fact that you can't buy lottery tickets

online; why not you might ask? Well, lottery companies have not been allowed to do so by the federal government. The argument is that if they allow online purchases it will promote gambling too much. Thus, we see that the lottery is not without its opposition. It clearly is viewed as perhaps a gateway form of gambling to more serious forms.

In the end, the major debate shouldn't be should be allowed the lottery because it is a benign form of gambling but rather why should we outlaw gambling at all? The United States was founded on principles of individual liberty. That the individual should have the right to choose; of course we know well this ability should be restricted when it infringes on others liberties. However, it is not clear how someone gambling directly hurts anyone else. Thus, we end up on the other side of a slippery slope debate. If we ban gambling because it has negative side effects then why not anything that could possibly in the future hurt someone else? Thus why not ban alcohol (of course it is banned in some parts of the US), violent T.V, angry music and anything else associated with possible bad behavior? Thus we clearly see how the lottery can lead to slippery slope arguments in both directions allow it and why not allow all forms of gambling. Ban it and why not ban everything that is associated with bad behavior? Well, it doesn't first appear as such a controversial topic it certainly is. In my opinion, it is better to allow things like the lottery and gambling and put up with the negative side effects then to deal with the negative side effects of restricting individual liberty. It is important to let the person choose to throw the dice away rather than, not being allowed to even pick them up.

Works Cited

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