

Veto No. 1988-5

SB 769

November 25, 1988

To the Honorable, the Senate
of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania:

I am returning herewith, without my approval, Senate Bill 769, Printer's No.2295, entitled "An act amending the act of December 17, 1981 (P.L.435, No.135), entitled 'An act providing for the regulation of pari-mutuel thoroughbred horse racing and harness horse racing activities; imposing certain taxes and providing for the disposition of funds from pari-mutuel tickets,' further providing for licenses for commissioners, employees and participants at horse races; providing for distributions from the Fair Fund; providing for nonprimary location wagering; and making a repeal."

Senate Bill 769 would authorize each of Pennsylvania's licensed horse and harness racing tracks to establish several so-called "nonprimary locations" for the purpose of conducting pari-mutuel wagering. These locations are apparently intended to include amenities, such as dining facilities and other features, to make them resemble the clubhouse facilities of a racetrack. In essence, however, Senate Bill 769 would permit the establishment of approximately two dozen gambling parlors in communities throughout Pennsylvania. This amounts to a substantial expansion of gambling activity in the Commonwealth, involving the creation of entirely new outlets for that activity. While I recognize the various economic aspects of this proposal, I am convinced the negative effects of the bill far outweigh the potential benefits.

It is true that the horse racing industry in Pennsylvania has experienced declining revenues in recent years for a variety of reasons. Senate Bill 769 could help to reverse that trend, but not only by encouraging current gamblers to bet more of their money at the new off-track parlors. Rather, and primarily, it would be because those parlors were successful in attracting new players who do not now bet the horses. Their success would depend on their ability to entice people who were not already enticed by the tracks themselves, by the advent of telephone wagering in 1981 or by intrastate simulcasting of races starting in 1984.

Since Senate Bill 769 represents a substantial expansion and extension of gambling in the Commonwealth, I must return the bill without my signature.

ROBERT P. CASEY