



Patrick Willard Joins NCPG as Director of Policy and Advocacy

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Washington, DC – The National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) today announced that Patrick Willard has joined the organization as the Director of Policy and Advocacy. The organization’s mission is to serve as the national advocate for programs and services to assist people and families affected by problem gambling.

“America is experiencing an unprecedented expansion of gambling that must be complemented by the adoption of robust responsible gambling programs and treatment for problem gambling at the state and federal level,” said Keith Whyte, NCPG Executive Director. “Patrick Willard, who has a wealth of experience in politics and health care, will be spearheading those important efforts for the National Council on Problem Gambling. We are excited he is joining our team.”

Willard will provide tools and strategies to educate policymakers on measures to address problem gambling and responsible gambling in state and federal laws. He will also work with affiliates and NCPG members to better advocate for the resources to treat gambling addiction and address the broad range of problem gambling issues.

“The rapidly expanding landscape of sports betting and other gambling activities across the nation increases the need for strong responsible gambling measures being put into place and for the critical supports to address the millions of families dealing with problem gambling,” said Willard. “I am also looking forward to working with counselors, health care professionals, and other affected parties to make sure the tools are in place to deal with what has, for too long, been an often-ignored mental health issue.”

Willard brings a dozen years of health care policy and advocacy experience from working at AARP and Families USA. He was the Senior Director for State and National Strategic Partnerships at Families USA, overseeing the organization’s work with state and national advocacy partners. He also directed its annual Health Action conference for state and national consumer health advocates.

Prior to joining Families USA, Willard worked for AARP in Tennessee and in the National Headquarters in Washington, DC. His main responsibilities included helping direct the organization's state offices in support of Medicaid expansion efforts and initiatives to assist family caregivers. Willard began his career as a newspaper reporter in Tennessee before becoming a press secretary and political strategist for Republican and Democratic lawmakers. He has worked on all political levels from the U.S. Congress to the Tennessee legislature and in local government, including as counselor to Mayor Bill Purcell in Nashville, Tennessee and on the Metro Nashville Social Services Commission. Willard holds a bachelor's degree in political science from Vanderbilt University and a master's degree in journalism from Columbia University.

About the National Council on Problem Gambling

Based in Washington DC, the National Council on Problem Gambling is the only national nonprofit organization that seeks to minimize the economic and social costs associated with gambling addiction by working with stakeholders in all facets of gambling. NCPG is neutral on legalized gambling. If gambling becomes a problem, NCPG urges people who gamble, as well as their loved ones, to contact the National Problem Gambling Helpline, which offers hope and help without judgment or shame. If you or someone you know has a gambling problem, call or text 1-800-522-4700 or visit www.ncpgambling.org/chat. Help is available 24/7 - it is free and confidential.

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