

For Immediate Release: Wednesday, July 1, 2009
Contact: Kate Lyman, Legislative Aide (614) 466-8012

Rep. Yuko Addresses VLT Proposal

Gambling measure could bring in \$933 Million in new revenue for the State of Ohio

COLUMBUS – State Representative Kenny Yuko (D-Richmond Heights) weighed in yesterday on the proposal to allow video lottery terminals at Ohio’s seven race tracks. The measure is part of a balanced budget framework put forth by Gov. Ted Strickland and House Democrats to make up for a \$3.2 billion budget shortfall. Allowing VLTs would address the deficit in the budget, as well as provide assistance to an industry that has been struggling of late.

“Our racing industry is a billion dollar a year business that we may lose if we don’t do something.” Rep Yuko said, “Not only will this measure help us to balance the budget, but our friends who run these race tracks are extremely generous to our hospitals and education system. I’m not willing to wage a billion dollar bet that they will survive if we don’t do something to help them.”

When asked about the four times that voters have turned down gambling proposals in the past, Rep Yuko stated “If I’m hungry and I’m offered four plates of food that are unpalatable to me, does that mean I’m not still hungry? Of course not, it just means I didn’t like the options that I was given.” Rep Yuko went on to say, “I’ve done my share of research when it comes to gambling and when I go out of state to a casino, I always feel at home because the parking lot is full of Ohio license plates.”

Of course there are also claims that opening the door to these video lottery terminals will exacerbate the issue of problem gamblers. Rep Yuko commented “Of course if these problems arise we will address them, but right now I’m worried about the problems facing our libraries, food banks, hospitals and programs such as Passport and ELI. If we don’t find a way to address this budget shortfall Ohio’s neediest citizens are going to suffer and that is inexcusable.”

While progress has been made on many other aspects of the budget, the Senate Republicans’ opposition to this single issue has resulted in a budget impasse. As a result, the legislature has passed a seven day interim budget that will immediately result in 30 percent across-the-board cuts to all programs.