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NEWS RELEASE

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HOPE FOR PROBLEM GAMBLERS

PHOENIX – Governor Janice Brewer has declared March 4-10 Arizona Problem Gambling Awareness Week. The Arizona Office of Problem Gambling (“OPG”) will host a day-long symposium in Phoenix on Monday, March 5, to address this important topic and inform the general public and behavioral therapists about the effects of problem gambling.

"Regulated gambling helps fund valuable programs for the Tribes and the State of Arizona, but there are social costs involved," said Mark Brnovich, Director of the Arizona Department of Gaming. "This symposium will help raise awareness of problem gambling issues and let people know where to go if they need help."

Contrary to stereotypes, problem gambling is often not a life-long issue, but something that can emerge for anyone who starts to make irresponsible decisions regarding gambling. "While problem gambling is a year-round concern, this week is especially useful to focus public attention on the disorder affecting 2-3% of the adult population," said Rick Pyper, Director of OPG. "If you have this condition or are close to somebody who does, it can be devastating."

This year's event will feature Don Feeney, President of the National Council on Problem Gambling. Bea Goodwin Aikens from the Lanie's Hope Foundation will also be sharing an account of her journey in addiction and recovery, and that of her sister-- whose drug overdose was linked to her gambling problem.

The symposium, "Hope for Problem Gambling", will be held March 5, at the Black Canyon Conference Center, 9440 North 25th Avenue in Phoenix. The event is open to the public and especially recommended for behavioral health counselors and students working in or studying the helping professions. Registration is \$90.00, which includes lunch and a certificate of completion for continuing education credits. Reservations can be made by calling 480-990-1887.

To assist in promoting the importance of this issue, the Arizona State Lottery will be including information regarding Problem Gambling Awareness Week in their slides advertised in more than 25,000 vendor locations throughout the state. Additionally, the National Council on Problem Gambling and Association of Problem Gambling Services Administrators has created www.npgaw.org to provide information and commemorate National Problem Gambling Awareness Week, which is occurring at the same time.

The Arizona Office of Problem Gambling seeks to support a sustainable continuum of services that reduces the impact of problem gambling by providing effective prevention, treatment and education programs throughout the state. OPG maintains a 24-hour problem gambling helpline, 1-800-NEXT-STEP. To obtain more information and listen to OPG's award-winning Public Service Announcements, please visit our website at: www.problemgambling.az.gov.

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