



**John C. Ackerman**

Tazewell County Board

*Continuing a Family Tradition of Community Service*

October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2009

## **\*\*\* Position Update \*\*\***

### **[Video Gambling in Tazewell County](#)**

In Saturday's Peoria Journal Star, Karen McDonald wrote about the Tazewell County Board Chairmen's effort to ban Video Gambling in Tazewell County. She reported on how this issue will likely be coming to the County Board as a whole at its November County Board Meeting after a unanimous vote from the County Executive Committee earlier in the week. With this issue now in the media's attention, I wanted to take this opportunity to reiterate my position on this subject that I stated in August of this year and also to discuss some facts that I feel were missing from the Journal Star report.

In August of this year, I wrote *"...here in Tazewell County I believe it would be pointless for the County Board to ban this extension if the majority of the municipalities in the county feel differently. With the vast majority of bars and halls where these machines could be located under the jurisdiction of the municipalities in Tazewell County, I do not want to setup multiple levels of standards that could be confusing."* I went on to request that District Three residents with concerns over this issue should discuss them with their local municipal leaders who I would be meeting with throughout the months of September and October.

With all but one of these District Three Municipal Visits completed, none of the communities expressed any plans at this time to move forward with a ban. I also took the time to contact several of the other municipalities in the county, including all of the top population municipalities in the county, and found the answer to be the same, no action at this time. Their opinions were the same as mine in that now is not the time for rash action on this important subject and that now is, to quote a City of Washington Alderman, "premature" to be trying to decide one way or the other with so many facts and issues with this legislation still to be worked out in Springfield.

One of the other major issues I have with moving forward with a ban at this time is one of the reasons Chairmen Zimmerman stated to ban it. In committee, he commented on the fact that this legislation was forced upon the residents of the state by legislators that did not take the time to get feedback from the people. In response to this rushed action, he is proposing to ban it in the county before all of the facts are known and a plan to regulate it is set. Now is not the time to rush a response to this issue, but rather to wait until all of the information is gathered and then possibly even ask the voters to decide what should be done.

The ban that is being discussed would only apply to unincorporated Tazewell County. Only 25 establishments would be affected by this ban. That is less than 15% of the total possible locations in the county. In just the four largest municipalities, the City of Pekin has 47 possible establishments, the City of East Peoria has 70, the Village of Morton has 30 and the City of Washington has 29 possible establishments, totaling 176 that would not be effected in just the four largest municipalities (I did contact all four and none are looking at a ban at this time). If there is such a large demand for a ban on this issue, than the answer is to be looking at a ban in these locations first since they have the most available. If the county bans it, and these municipalities do not, have we really provided leadership on this

issue or are we just providing more talk with no real action. Real leadership would be working with the municipalities to move in a common direction.

Currently we have a ban on Video Gambling in the county, and currently this ban is not being actively enforced. If we do not have the resources now to properly enforce a ban, what is the plan for this new ban? Where are we going to get the revenue to fund these new resources to enforce this ban? These are just two questions of the many that need to be answered.

While I am not for gambling or using gambling as a funding source, I want to look at what is best for Tazewell County. Another law that cannot be enforced is not going to do us any good. Also, a law that will only affect less than 15% of the businesses in the county is no good. Finally, now is not the time to be pushing this issue while the real facts and details concerning it are still being worked out in Springfield. While it is true that three other counties have banned it (Cook, Lake and DuPage), that also means that the rest have not.

As always, I consider it an honor and a privilege to serve you on the Tazewell County Board and if I can be of any assistance to you, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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