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Backus Legion charitable gambling contribution increases 49 percent in 2016

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Posted: Thursday, March 23, 2017 7:46 am

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BACKUS - Citing a continued improvement in the economy, moderate gas prices that helped boost travel to the lakes area and public support of its program, the Backus American Legion Charitable Gaming Partnership increased its contribution to charity and taxes paid to government by \$29,814 or 49 percent in 2016.

Donations to civic causes, including education, service organizations, food shelves, public safety and youth recreation totaled \$46,822, an increase of \$16,647 or 55 percent over 2015. The state of Minnesota continued to be the largest single recipient of the Legion's charitable gaming profits, collecting \$39,662 in taxes and fees in 2016, an increase of \$12,610 or 46 percent from the previous year.

The heavy state burden has continued to draw criticism from Allied Charities of Minnesota, the umbrella organization representing the charitable gaming industry.

Sponsoring organizations, including veterans and fraternal clubs, were able to donate \$60 million to their communities but sent another \$56 million to the state in taxes and fees. Al Lund, ACM executive director, noted in a year-end analysis that 200 of 1,200 state licensed charitable gaming organization now pay more in taxes than they are able to donate to their communities. He predicted that trend will continue and that unless the Legislature enacts tax relief for charitable gaming, a majority of organizations, including veterans posts, will be paying more to the state than they raise for their charities.

"We understand that we will pay more than others in state tax, but more to the state than we have to use is something that we can no longer stand for," Lund said in a statement describing the status of the industry.

Education, public safety, youth recreation and local food shelves were among the chief benefactors of the Legion's partnership donations. The program includes the Backus Post, located at the intersection of Hwys. 371 and 87 W., and Willard's Saloon & Eatery in downtown Backus. This year the post added the Birchwood Char House in Hackensack to its program.

The post doubled its scholarship program donation to the Pine-River Backus School District, increasing the 10 scholarships awarded from \$500 to \$1,000 each for a total expenditure of \$10,000. It also raised from \$1,000 to \$1,500 the contribution to the Central Lakes Rotary STRIVE program aimed at keeping underperforming Pine River-Backus students in school, graduating and preparing for post-secondary education.

The Legion increased its support for boys and girls scouting activities and continued to support Hackensack and Pine River food shelves serving the area with a total contribution of \$6,000.





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to the annual, summer-long Hackensack area childrens fishing contest

The post also continued its supports of childrens' holiday parties, veterans assistance programs and supported its auxiliary program providing holiday gifts for active duty troops.

"We are extremely pleased with the growing public support of our program," said Backus Legion Commander Eugene Gagnon. "It means we can continue to increase our commitment to meeting needs of our area residents and communities – making northern Minnesota a better place to live."

Charitable gambling's main source of revenue is pull-tabs, which have consistently provided more than 90 percent of revenues but includes bingo, paddle wheels, raffles and tip boards.

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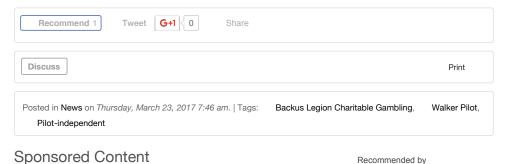
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