

NEW: Faith Leaders from Across the Commonwealth Send Letter Asking Lawmakers to Uphold Ban on “Skill” Games

Today, faith leaders from across the Commonwealth join together to send a clear message: **“skill” games are harmful to Virginia communities, and the ban on the devices should be upheld.**

The so-called “skill” game industry has a proven history of targeting low-income and minority neighborhoods in Virginia, and community leaders are saying enough is enough:

“Our neighborhoods can no longer be allowed to serve as a battleground for the power struggle between Virginia’s elected leaders and the disrespectful, shady ‘skill’ gaming industry. And while many local governments and law enforcement officers are making efforts to rid these devices from their street corners, we are looking to the General Assembly to back up their work by upholding and strengthening the ban on “skill” games this year.”

The General Assembly should keep the focus on priorities that will uplift Virginia communities and reject attempts to legalize an onslaught of predatory convenience store slot machines.

The full letter from Virginia’s faith leaders can be found below.

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March 10, 2026

As faith leaders from across the Commonwealth, we feel a responsibility to represent the needs of our communities while aligning our efforts in service to what is best for our congregations. To that end, we join today to express alarm at the continued push to allow predatory neighborhood slot machines or “skill” games to infiltrate grocery stores, gas stations, restaurants, and rest stops in our communities.

So-called “skill” games are illegal in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Yet they continue to operate and, somehow, Virginia lawmakers continue to entertain permission slips for this industry that has shown nothing but disregard for our rule of law.

These machines have a proven history of targeting Virginia’s most vulnerable communities. Research shows that 70 percent of “skill” machines have been placed in areas where household incomes fell below the Commonwealth’s median. On top of that, in urban areas like Richmond and Virginia Beach, these devices were also concentrated in predominantly minority communities.

We cannot stand by while a business entity comes into our backyard and so clearly targets our neighbors.

Additionally, because of the ever-present nature of the machines, we’re greatly concerned about the impact of exposure to this kind of gambling on our young people. Virginia’s Council on Problem Gambling says, *“[i]t is common sense, and the law, to not allow children access to a casino floor, but allowing these devices in everyday stores in Virginia, which do not have the proper safeguards to keep children away from the devices, carries the same risks.”*

Our children deserve to grow up in a place that prioritizes their safety, and failing to safeguard their impressionable minds would be reckless.

Enough is enough. **Our neighborhoods can no longer be allowed to serve as a battleground for the power struggle between Virginia’s elected leaders and the disrespectful, shady “skill” gaming industry.** And while many local governments and law enforcement officers are making efforts to rid these devices from their street corners, we are looking to the General Assembly to back up their work by upholding and strengthening the ban on “skill” games this year.

During the 2026 legislative session, rather than looking for ways to expand Virginia's already substantial gaming offerings, lawmakers should focus on kitchen-table issues – like affordability and opportunity – that make living in Virginia safe and equitable for everyone.

Signed,

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