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A Texas government and politics blog.

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Conservative groups disagree on gambling

By Tim Eaton | Monday, January 23, 2012, 03:18 PM

A Texas conservative policy organization sent a letter to state lawmakers last week telling them that gambling is not the answer to the state's budget woes.

The Texas Public Policy Foundation's executive director, Arlene Wohlgemuth, and its director of fiscal policy, former state Rep. Talmadge Heflin, sought to counter a pro-gambling letter sent to state leaders last week from anti-tax crusader Grover Norquist, the president of Americans for Tax Reform.

Norquist noted in his letter that research has shown that gambling in Texas "is one simple way to grow the Texas economy, thereby generating more tax revenue for the state."

Neither Wohlgemuth nor Heflin share Norquist's perspective.

"While we generally agree with our friends at ATR on tax and spending issues, when it comes to gambling, that is not the case. Their suggestion that gambling is a way 'in which to rectify the anticipated budget imbalance' is wrong," Wohlgemuth and Heflin wrote.

The foundation's preferred approach would lean more toward fiscal discipline as the state faces the likelihood of another budget shortfall ahead of the 2013 legislative session.

"Texas should keep government spending at the level necessary to match available revenue," Wohlgemuth and Heflin wrote. "This approach of 'living within one's means' is simple and commonsense, and is in fact the same one that each Texas family puts into practice every day."

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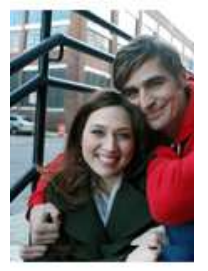
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