

## Lotto Blotto

**By Reg P. Wydeven  
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When I was in college, one of my roommates, Obes, worked in the kitchen of a local bar. At the end of his shift, he would routinely bring food back to the house for us to devour. He'd bring onion rings, burgers, fries, mozzarella sticks and our favorite, cheese curds. It was the most popular bar in town, though, so it was a really tough job.

Much to our dismay, Obes quit his job at the bar and applied at the local gas station's convenience store. He figured he could get a lot of studying done behind the counter and work the cash register as needed when customers bought gas or a gallon of milk.

Unbeknownst to Obes, however, the gas station had a list longer than the yardstick attached to the key to the bathroom containing rules about who couldn't buy what. He had to learn simple obvious laws, such as not selling tobacco products to anyone under 18 or alcohol to anyone under 21.

Obes also had to learn the store's policy restricting the sale of cough syrup, which youngsters drank for the alcohol. There were also limits of the sale of over-the-counter cold medicines that contain the ingredient pseudoephedrine, which is commonly used to make methamphetamine. These limitations were actually made into law when President Bush incorporated the Combat Methamphetamine Epidemic Act of 2005 into the Patriot Act.

Finally, customers using food stamps could not use them for nonfood items, such as tobacco products, alcohol or diapers. If a new bill is passed in North Carolina, convenience store clerks will have even less time to study as they learn additional sales restrictions.

The new legislation in the tar heel state would ban welfare recipients and people in bankruptcy from buying lottery tickets in the state. If a vendor did knowingly sell lottery tickets to a customer on welfare or in bankruptcy, the law would punish them, including fines.

Lawmakers in North Carolina feel it would be counterproductive for the government to accept money from welfare recipients who are already in dire financial straits. North Carolina House Majority Leader Paul "Skip" Stam explained that, "We're giving them welfare to help them live, and yet by selling them a ticket, we're taking away their money that is there to provide them the barest of necessities."

Because of the microscopic chances of winning, opponents of the lottery often characterize it as a tax on the poor, the uneducated, and the elderly, who are all more likely to buy tickets. This is especially true in North Carolina, where the North Carolina Policy Watch determined that the poorest counties in the state have the highest spending per capita on lottery tickets. Despite this, as jackpots raise to hundreds of millions of dollars, lottery sales around the nation have been shattering records.

Odds are North Carolina residents won't like the proposed law.