Nevada group wants more money to aid problem gamblers

By Cy Ryan, Las Vegas Sun

CARSON CITY – A state advisory committee wants the governor to restore funding to help problem gamblers that was cut in half in 2011.

A letter sent to Gov. Brian Sandoval today by the Advisory Committee on Problem Gambling says it "strongly urges you to recommend restoring this funding to the level intended by the Legislature when the revolving fund was established in 2005."

The program was originally financed from a quarterly $2-per-slot-machine tax but was lowered to $1 per machine during the budget crunch in 2011.

Carol O'Hare, chairwoman of the committee, said it is particularly important to increase funding to help Internet gamblers. Nevada is moving toward allowing intrastate online poker.

"If we are to play a leadership role in the Internet gambling era, as the state hopes, it is vital that we play a leadership role in every aspect," the commission's letter stated.

Restoring full funding "would not only allow expansion of treatment to cover internet clients, but also the restoration of prevention activities that would keep them from developing problems in the first place," the committee's letter to the governor said.

The committee estimates there are 68,000 Nevadans with pathological gambling problems.

Figures from the state Department of Health and Human Services shows $708,617 was spent in fiscal 2012 treating 455 problem

gamblers, and there was no money for prevention programs.

The advisory committee said research by UNLV shows 92 percent of those treated show positive results. Fifty-two percent stopped gambling and 40 percent reduced their gambling.

More than 3,000 Nevadans have received state-funded treatment since 2006, according to a fact sheet from the advisory committee.

Sandoval has declined to reveal details of his proposed budget, which will be released Jan. 16 in his State of the State message to the Legislature.