

# Gambling for tuition:

Coram bets on video lottery terminals, faces resistance from gaming industry

BY KATHARHYN HEIDELBERG  
DAILY PRESS SENIOR WRITER

State Rep. Don Coram wants the state to take a gamble on funding tuition for higher education — a literal one.

The Montrose Republican is in the process of drafting legislation that would allow video lottery terminals at limited locations, likely the racetrack at Arapahoe Park in Aurora, and a possible Western Slope location.

"We're still in the drafting stages," Coram said Wednesday. "We're trying to think outside the box, to do something to generate money for higher education. This is revenue that's generated voluntarily. If you don't like it, you don't have to play it."

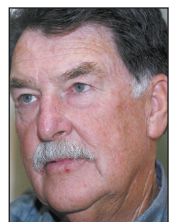
The odds may be against Coram, who said he expects pushback from the gambling industry at a level "no more than the war in the Middle East." He also spoke to a casino lobbyist Tuesday and said an agreement is close. He expects to have a draft bill in the next few days.

Coram envisions a voluntary funding stream that will help students without means or connections afford college. The video terminals could draw more people to horse racing, revitalizing the sport and the agricultural industry that supports it.

To the Colorado Gaming Association, Coram's idea will create a giant casino that competes directly with the limited-stakes gambling allowed in Cripple Creek, Black Hawk and Central City by a 1990 vote that amended the state Constitution.

Arapahoe Park's relative proximity to the three towns is a particular threat, said Lois Rice, the gaming association's executive director.

While the sovereign Ute Mountain Ute and Southern Ute tribes operate casinos in Towaoc and Ignacio, these do not compete significantly against the three mountain towns because of the distance, Rice



Coram

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Former Montrose High wrestlers Lyle Wright, left, Jordan Passehl and Drew Schumann are all now members of the team at Colorado Mesa University in Grand Junction.

# Three amigos

Former Montrose wrestlers enjoying time together at CMU

BY MATT LINDBERG  
DAILY PRESS SPORTS EDITOR

Jordan Passehl, Drew Schumann and Lyle Wright walked through the Montrose wrestling room during a recent practice, and it was obvious their presence was noted by the members of the current team.

The school has seen a prolific number of its football, basketball and volleyball players take their skills to the college level in recent years, but the Montrose wrestling program went eight years without one of its former members going on to compete in college. That changed in 2010 when Passehl, who won a Class 4A state championship in the 189-pound weight class during his senior season, elected to join the Colorado Mesa University wrestling squad.

In 2011, Montrose's Drew Schumann and Lyle Wright opted to do the same. Now, the three Mavericks are enjoying

**'In general, kids haven't gone on to the next level. Now we have four that have gone on in the past three years, and that's pretty cool. It's nice to see kids showing the interest.'**

Kevin Passehl  
Montrose wrestling coach

their time competing together at the collegiate level. The trio said carrying on the Montrose wrestling tradition at college is something special.

"For some little kid to still see us doing it hopefully gives them an outlet," Schumann said. "They can know that the sport is something that can take them to the next level. There are Montrose kids competing at the next level."

Montrose wrestling coach Kevin Passehl, who also is Jordan's father, said that having the three continue their efforts in the sport in college is great for the program and community.

"In general, kids haven't gone on to the next level," he said. "Now we have four (see related story) that have gone on in the past three years, and that's pretty cool. It's nice to see kids showing the interest."

Jordan Passehl, who is a sophomore, currently wrestles in the 197-pound weight division. Schumann and Wright

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# Feds insist on GJ trial for indicted docs

Jahani, Peper caused losses in excess of \$3 million, government claims

BY KATHARHYN HEIDELBERG  
DAILY PRESS SENIOR WRITER

Federal prosecutors remain firm in their stance that former Montrose physician Sam Jahani and co-defendant Eric Peper should be tried in Grand Junction, not Denver.

Per a Jan. 5 filing, U.S. prosecutor Michelle Heldmeyer accuses defense attorneys of distorting the facts, and takes issue with what she called their "rather insulting" assertion that Western Slope jurors might be too racist to give Iran-born Jahani a fair hearing.

Jahani and Peper were indicted the summer of 2011, two years after local authorities, with agents from the IRS and Drug Enforcement Administration, raided Jahani's Urgent Care Inc. offices in Montrose, Delta and Grand Junction, as well as his home here.

Jahani and Peper, a doctor who once worked for him at the clinics, are accused of contributing to the overdose

deaths of four patients (Jahani three and Peper, one),

multiple counts of fraud, and money laundering and over-prescribing controlled substances to patients, including those they knew had substance-abuse issues or were "doctor shopping."

They deny the allegations.

Although most pre-trial hearings to date have been held in Denver, the U.S. Attorney's Office argues the trials should be held in Grand Junction, where a federal magistrate court is located.

Most of the alleged victims

are Western Slope residents, and they have the right, under

the basic tenets of jurisprudence, to access proceedings, Heldmeyer said. Additionally, there would be significant cost to witnesses from the Western Slope, were the trials to be held in Denver.

The defendants have claimed the victims would be the limited number of health-care providers whom Jahani and Peper allegedly defrauded, not their patients. Jahani attorney Stephen Peters said there are only five instances of such alleged fraud — the upcoding of claim letters, and these arose from the accusations of a disgruntled ex-

employee.

**'The fact that the indictment specifically charges a limited number of instances of fraud, rather than hundreds, does not limit the government's ability to prove all fraudulent conduct and losses at trial.'**

Michelle Heldmeyer  
U.S. prosecutor

Before his being indicted, Jahani was sued by his former office manager for wrongful termination. The woman said she was fired because she blew the whistle on alleged upcoding of Medicare claims. Jahani's subsequent bankruptcy protection put that case on hiatus.

Jahani was also party to a Medicare fraud case originating in Texas in 2003, which he settled with the government in 2004.

Attorney Peters argued last year that extensive publicity of Jahani's new case dims the prospects for a fair trial on the Western Slope. He also suggested that jurors might believe Jahani is Muslim and hold that against him. His client is Christian, Peters said.

Peper says the federal court facilities in Grand Junction are not adequate for a trial, especially because they are being remodeled.

The arguments, said Heldmeyer in her Jan. 5 response, are without merit. Not only can a fair trial be held in

Grand Junction, and in reasonable accommodations, but the defendants' opposition is riddled with inaccuracies, she said.

"The defendants misread the indictment" as it relates to upcoding, Heldmeyer said.

Counts 1-11 in the indictment allege several types of fraud, and the government has ample evidence to support the allegations "including numerous instances of rampant illegal drug prescriptions leading to injury and death of the defendants' patients, as well as proof of records falsification, false billing and hundreds of instances of upcoding," her response says.

"The fact that the indictment specifically charges a limited number of instances of fraud, rather than hundreds, does not limit the government's ability to prove all fraudulent conduct and losses at trial."

The losses are significant — in excess of \$3 million, the government contends.

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