

More lottery funds should go to scholarships

THE ISSUE: *The percentage of lottery money used to fund scholarships in New Mexico is 24 percent.*

WE SAY: *That amount should be larger; in fact, legislators should set a minimum percentage.*

Ten states set a minimum percentage of their lottery income that must be set aside for beneficiaries or programs. Most are set between 30-35 percent, ensuring the money flows to the much-needed projects.

In New Mexico, only 24 percent goes toward the designated beneficiary program, N.M. Lottery Success Scholarships. Prizes comprised 56.5 percent with the remaining portion being administrative costs. Only four other states have a higher percentage used on administrative costs.

Think New Mexico, after studying the issue, recently recommended to lawmakers that a minimum requirement of 30 percent be set aside to specifically fund the lottery scholarship program.

The New Mexico lottery scholarship is a good program. Basically, any student who graduates from a New Mexico high school can have their college tuition paid for at any state-sponsored higher education institution. The students must maintain a certain grade-point average to keep the scholarship.

The scholarship gives most any high school student in New Mexico an opportunity to earn a college degree.

If the lottery scholarship is important — and we believe it is — ensuring its future viability is equally important. The single best way is to make sure that the money raised through the lottery truly benefits those it was created for: students.

Setting a minimum percentage of revenues for the lottery scholarship should be done.