

April 11, 2017

Dear Legislators,

The Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG) would like to express its opposition to the expansion of casino gaming in Connecticut. Our opposition is grounded in a recognition of the high costs of casino gaming. These include:

1. *Transportation and congestion.* A third casino will add more traffic to already congested highways. Congestion is major impediment to quality of life and economic competitiveness in Connecticut. Putting additional cars on the road will only exacerbate the situation.
2. *Saturated market.* Activity at Foxwoods and Mohegan Sun have collapsed since neighboring states opened casinos (40% fewer revenues and 8,000 fewer jobs). In a saturated market such as this, the returns to new capacity are greatly diminished. Adding machines and tables in Connecticut will not bring these revenues or visitors back.
3. *Social costs.* Casinos facilitate problem and pathological gambling. With incentives like 'free' alcohol and hotel rooms, casinos entice patrons to play longer and to return, creating conditions that are conducive to the development of addiction. Studies have shown that 35-50% of game revenue comes from problem and pathological gamblers. Many chronic gamblers are vulnerable persons, such as elderly or low wage earners. When a family member is a pathological gambler, studies have shown increased domestic violence, child abuse, divorce, crime, and suicides.
4. *Damage to families and communities.* Casinos drain wealth from communities, hurt local businesses, depress property values, reduce community involvement and family stability, and detract from other forms of social capital that are at the heart of a successful community.
5. *Crime.* Addiction can drive otherwise law-abiding persons to criminal acts to sustain their habits. Financial crimes such as theft and embezzlement are often the unfortunate consequence to a gambling addiction.
6. *Insufficient study.* We are not aware of any empirical analysis of the benefits, costs, or outcomes to the expansion of commercial gaming in Connecticut. Academic research has demonstrated that the long-term costs of such an expansion generally outweigh the short-term benefits.
7. *Limited economic mobility.* Casinos sustain mostly low- and middle-wage part-time employees. While jobs are needed, they do not provide sufficient opportunity for advancement and should not be viewed as sustainable careers, especially for people with dependents.

For these reasons, casinos are not a solution to the state's budget challenges, nor are they a good bet for long-term growth in Connecticut. We urge you to oppose all efforts to expand casinos in our state.

Sincerely,



Francis R. Pickering  
Executive Director