

## **Press Release**

***For Release Tuesday, January 24, 2017, 11 am***

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### **Coalition to Oppose Off-Reservation Commercial Casino Gambling**

Hartford -- Eleven groups spanning a broad range of liberal and conservative viewpoints have joined in a non-partisan alliance to oppose the legalization of off-reservation commercial casino gambling in Connecticut.

The alliance, “The Coalition against Casino Expansion in Connecticut,” will work to educate the public and state officials about the economic and social costs of more legalized gambling and to oppose efforts to open a commercial casino in the Hartford area.

The Coalition, which is continuing to add members, currently includes: The Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ, The Episcopal Church in Connecticut, The Connecticut League of Women Voters, The Connecticut Catholic Conference, The Family Institute of Connecticut, The New England Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, the Connecticut Association for Human Services, The Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport, Advocacy Unlimited, Inc., The Farmington Valley American Muslim Center, The New England Conference of the United Methodist Church, and The American Baptist Churches of Connecticut.

The Coalition issued a white paper questioning the wisdom of expanding casino gambling in Connecticut at a time when the Northeast faces an increasing casino glut and there is a growing body of research on casinos’ negative economic and social effects. It called on the state to conduct an impartial study of the economic and social costs of casino expansion and require a statewide referendum on expansion before authorizing another casino. It also urged that any town considering a casino be required to allow its residents to vote in a local referendum on whether to approve it.

Economically, the white paper points out, casino winnings are flat or shrinking in many states, five of New Jersey’s twelve casinos recently closed because of mounting cross-border competition, and Connecticut’s casino revenue is down

40% from its peak. Based on the trends, a 2016 study from the Nelson Rockefeller Institute of Government warns state governments that while new casinos may generate short-run increases in public revenues, those revenues can quickly reverse and decline.

The white paper notes that over half Connecticut's casino revenue originally came from out-of-staters, who brought new money to the state. But those customers have been declining and a convenience casino won't bring them back. As a result, the jobs and revenue produced by the new casino would be funded overwhelmingly by the gambling losses of Connecticut residents, which would merely redistribute existing money within the state without generating economic growth. In addition, the new casino would take jobs and revenue from the state's existing casinos as well as from local restaurants and entertainment businesses.

Socially, according to the Coalition:

- Casinos spread gambling addiction, debt, bankruptcies, broken families, and crime. A 2009 state-sponsored study reported that Connecticut's casinos were followed by a steep increase in the number of state residents seeking treatment for gambling addiction, together with a 400% increase in arrests for embezzlement, while a 2014 study from Western Connecticut State University showed that violent crimes increased in the towns surrounding the state's casinos despite a sharp drop nationally and in Connecticut as a whole.
- Multiple studies show that 35-50% of casino gambling revenue comes from problem and pathological gamblers, meaning that the casino industry's business model is dependent upon preying on people with gambling problems and up to half the money government obtains from casinos comes from exploiting those individuals and those close to them.
- The National Council of Problem Gambling estimates that one in five gambling addicts attempts suicide, a rate higher than for any other addiction.
- A landmark report from the non-partisan Institute for American Values concludes that local and regional casinos drain wealth from communities, weaken nearby businesses, hurt property values, and reduce civic participation, family stability, and other forms of social capital that are at the heart of a successful community.

The Coalition is especially concerned that while the proposed convenience casino would keep some Connecticut gamblers from going to the MGM casino being built in Springfield, it would expand casino gambling in Connecticut by making it more readily available to hundreds of thousands of state residents, thereby encouraging more people to gamble and adding to the state's economic and social problems.

In addition, the Coalition is concerned that legalizing off-reservation commercial casino gambling would lead the state's casino tribes to revive their original proposal to open casinos in Fairfield County. It would also open the door to other interests seeking licenses for casinos and other forms of gambling, including neighborhood slots parlors, Internet gambling and sports betting. Expansion could also trigger a provision of the current state-tribal compact under which the tribes would no longer have to pay the state 25% of their slot machine revenue.

The Coalition noted that New Jersey recently held a statewide referendum where residents voted 4-1 against a proposal to expand casino gambling beyond Atlantic City, reflecting the overwhelming view that casinos have become an economic and social dead end for that state. "We believe," the Coalition concluded, "that casino gambling has become a dead end for our state, as well."

Individuals and groups interested in participating in the Coalition are invited to visit the Coalition's website at [www.nomorecasinosinct.org](http://www.nomorecasinosinct.org) and to contact Michele Mudrick at 860 796-3822 or [MicheleM@ctucc.org](mailto:MicheleM@ctucc.org)