

MASSACHUSETTS CATHOLIC CONFERENCE
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The Honorable Deval Patrick
Governor
Massachusetts State House
Boston, MA 02133

November 18, 2011

BY HAND

Dear Governor Patrick,

The Massachusetts Catholic Conference has continually spoken out against the dangers of legalized casino gambling in the Commonwealth. Today, as the expanded gambling bill sits on your desk awaiting your signature, the Massachusetts Catholic Conference respectfully asks you to reconsider your position and exercise your veto power to prevent this legislation from becoming law.

As you know, yesterday the Department of Labor and Workforce Development released October unemployment figures. The Commonwealth's unemployment rate remained steady at 7.3%, while also gaining 10,800 jobs. The Commonwealth's 7.3% unemployment rate is well below the national average and has been trending in this right direction for several months.

As recently as October, you signed into law a spending bill that returned \$350 million to the state's "rainy-day fund," bringing that balance to a robust \$1.4 billion, the third largest stabilization fund in the nation. While our financial crisis may not be over and the economy remains fragile, the Commonwealth is well positioned for a full recovery. Expanding casino gambling in the Commonwealth is simply not the solution to delivering a full economic recovery to Massachusetts.

Expanded, predatory gambling will only add to the need for state assistance in the Commonwealth. It will also create a reliance on unstable revenue which has shown to be shrinking in other states that have embraced this "quick fix." Furthermore, predatory gambling threatens the moral fabric of our society. Revenues will depend upon those who are addicted to gambling, many of whom already fill the ranks of the poorest in the Commonwealth. The gambling industry will threaten local businesses and change the entire character of communities.

The Catholic Church is not against gambling per se. Indeed, gambling can be a legitimate form of entertainment when done in moderation. However, expanded gambling is inherently predatory. The increased social welfare costs include, but are not limited to, increased bankruptcies, crime, gambling addictions, broken families, and increased poverty. While the creation of jobs and a possible short-term spike in revenue are good things for the Commonwealth, it is certain that expanded gambling will bring with it undeniable and significant costs.

Just two days ago, a *Boston Globe* editorial urged you to veto the gambling bill as it stands today. Entitled “Gambling bill gets worse; Patrick should veto it,” the editorial states that the “final bill fails to protect the public interest,” and “embodies the dubious political forces that have shaped the casino debate.” Indeed, the expanded gambling bill is simply a “quick fix” that is fundamentally contrary to the rich history and dignity of the Commonwealth.

Finally, I have enclosed a copy of the September 16, 2011 Massachusetts Catholic Bishops’ Statement on Expanded Gambling. Please take the time to review the concerns outlined by the Bishops and reconsider your position on this legislation.

Sincerely,

James F. Driscoll, Esq.

Executive Director

Enclosure

cc: Lieutenant Governor Timothy P. Murray
Senate President Therese Murray
Speaker of the House Robert A. DeLeo