

As a religious leader, I sometimes feel called to speak out on issues that have a profound spiritual impact on our community. In that vein, we should carefully consider how we vote on Proposal 1, which, if passed, would authorize construction of several casinos around the state. During my career as a member of the clergy, I have pastored to any number of people who have been affected by addiction. Addictive behaviors often get their start with a desire for a “quick fix,” those things we seek when the pain of life feels great enough to warrant destructive activities that, for a little while, make us feel better. Whether our vice is alcohol, food, sex or gambling, the results are the same. That good feeling fades. I have observed casinos where seniors spend their life's savings in depressed stupor.

The proposal to build casinos in our communities is a similar cry for help. Economically, many people are hurting, and the promise of job creation and increased tourism are appealing. But what about those who fall to addiction, especially during the tenuous times - New York residents who spend their hard-earned money on the misguided hopes of escape from poverty? Will they find meaning and satisfaction in their work?

Our communities need rewarding, meaningful jobs that help to bring out the best in people - both in those who serve and are served. While casinos may seem to solve some of our problems for a little while, quick fixes wear off. If Proposal 1 passes, New Yorkers may find themselves with less hope than before - and with time and energy wasted on an illusive idea that cannot make us more productive, more joyful or more resilient.

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