

Saugerties, New York
September 15, 2009

Larry EchoHawk
Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs
1849 C. Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Assistant Secretary EchoHawk,

In 2005-06 engaged citizens of Saugerties in Ulster County, New York, beat off an attempt to locate an off-reservation casino in our town. We were concerned about the broad ripple of social ills associated with casinos. We were heartened by Secretary Kemphorne's subsequent upholding of the Indian Gaming Act's proscription of off-reservation casinos.

Now we have a proposal for as many as three off-reservation Indian casinos in nearby Sullivan County bringing those ills to Sullivan and closer to us and also probably renewing pressures for casino development in Ulster and surrounding counties as politicians reason-"if we are to get the harms, let's also get a piece of the action." Pretty soon we are in a race to the bottom as localities chase the gambling dollars. The price will be paid by the taxpayer, not the casino, as associated costs will eventually surpass the casino tax payments.

Our state politicians studiously ignore independent studies (not those in the service of the casino industry) which show great human costs as casinos stimulate and evoke problem and pathological gambling, leading to increased embezzlement, fraud, crime, depression, suicide, marital breakup, medical and social service costs, the undermining of local businesses. Earl Grinols in his book "Gambling in America" shows that "the long term cost-to-benefit ratio from introducing casinos to a region that did not have them previously is greater than 3:1. As a device for raising taxes, casinos are more socially costly than a conventional tax. Even assuming that cost numbers are overstated by a factor of three and correcting them, casinos still barely fail a cost-benefit test."

It seems highly immoral as well as shortsighted to support state government by means which predictably increase all sorts of social evils. It's not a fitting policy for a great country and certainly not consistent with an avowal of "family values."

Please uphold the law and block casinos which are detrimental to our communities and values. No off-reservation casinos in Sullivan County!

Sincerely,

Arnold Lieber, M.D.

copy:

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