

Coalition Against Gambling in New York

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remarks prepared for press conference, October 31, 2005, Buffalo City Hall, by Joel Rose, on behalf of the Coalition Against Gambling in New York and Citizens Against Casino Gambling in Erie County

We are all here today because we are opposed to putting a gambling casino in the heart of our historic Cobblestone District. I want to direct my remarks today, however, to certain public officials who are *not* here.

First, to Mayor Anthony Masiello: Mayor Masiello, you have wondered aloud why certain people always want to hold Buffalo back. I suggest to you, sir, that it is *you* who is trying to sell off our City to the highest bidder, and in so doing, to drag it into the cesspool of poverty, crime, prostitution, and corruption that other gambling cities have become. We mean to hold *you* back in that ill-conceived effort, Mr. Mayor, *not the City*.

You have said that you can respect opposition based on a *moral* argument, but you have *no patience* for opposition based on *any other grounds*. So, you have no patience for those who object to pulling money out of Buffalo by the truckload? You have no patience for those who are concerned about the bankruptcy, broken homes, and suicides that would inevitably result from your casino? Mr. Mayor, I'm sorry you have no patience for our concerns about the full range of problems your casino would visit upon this community. For our part, we are speaking truth to power, and we do not need your approval.

Next, to Governor George Pataki: Governor, where do you get the authority to ignore the explicit ban against casino gambling enshrined in our state constitution? Did you not take an oath to uphold that very document? One of your fellow gambling promoters said recently that you were merely exploiting a *loophole* in the constitution. Is that true? What loophole would that be? The constitution is very clear on this point, and you have evidently just chosen to ignore it. Perhaps someday you can explain that to your grandchildren.

While we're on the subject of explaining, Mr. Governor, what happened to all that prosperity you promised Niagara Falls when you announced the Compact? *Your own economists* knew it wouldn't happen. Did you have your fingers crossed?

Finally, to Interior Secretary Gale Norton: Madame Secretary, you knew this was going to be a bad deal for our community when you allowed the Compact to go into effect only by not explicitly disapproving it. You let us all down then, but you have another chance to set things right: you can disapprove the transfer of sovereignty on the land designated for a casino.

Here in New York, our highest law says that *we don't have to have a casino* just because a few short-sighted public officials *say* we do. It would require a *constitutional amendment*, which would require a *vote of all the people*. Madame Secretary, IGRA stipulates that you may approve Indian gambling *only to the extent* that it is otherwise permitted in the State. The Governor's claim that Indian casino gambling is permitted here, despite our constitution, is based on IGRA itself. Can you really support that claim? If so, where in IGRA does it say that? Please, this time, *do the right thing. Don't turn your back while our constitution is trampled once again.*