

Catholic Conference of Ohio

The Catholic bishops of Ohio are pleased to join, today, with these excellent like-minded colleagues in opposing State Issue 3. As most of you know, the Catholic Church is not opposed to all gambling; however the bishops have voted unanimously to oppose this particular Initiative.

As the bishops carefully reviewed Issue 3, they asked three questions. The first was: Is passage of this issue more likely to help or harm people, especially the poor and those more vulnerable, to the lure of casino gambling? The bishops concluded that more harm than good will result from this particular proposal. They wrote: "More persons and families will be seduced into financial hardship, rather than helped. More societal problems will be aggravated, rather than improved."

The second question was: Is this Issue well written and well conceived? The conclusion was a resounding NO. The media often have asked us whether passage of this issue will close down one of our longstanding charitable fundraising activities, known as "Parish Las Vegas Nights." Our answer is that we don't know, and we hope not. We are, however, deeply concerned when the Attorney General suggests that the language in the proposed amendment is less than clear. This is one indication, and I know many colleagues here today are voicing other concerns, that this issue is poorly written and overindulgent towards the gambling interests of private business.

Our last question was: Is this proposal appropriately drafted for inclusion in our state constitution? Again we say NO. The constitution should not be used as a tool for private companies to set up exclusive monopolies, take money out of Ohio, and promote their self-interest at the expense of Ohio's citizens. The bishops wrote: "Since Issue 3 is a constitutional amendment, voters have no recourse for fixing such concerns except to pass another constitutional amendment. This flawed casino proposal should not be enacted into our Ohio Constitution."

In closing, let me state once again, the Catholic Bishops in Ohio continue to believe casino gambling, as proposed in Issue 3, is not in the best moral, social and economic interests of the citizens of our state. We have communicated this concern to our 856 parishes throughout Ohio and all our Catholic diocesan newspapers. Through bulletin announcements and informational programming we hope to convey this choice to Catholics throughout this state.

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Ohio Ballot Issues

November 2009

The Catholic Conference of Ohio encourages voters to carefully consider the three statewide Issues that are on the November 3, 2009 ballot.

Issue 3

To Allow for One Casino Each in Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, and Toledo Constitutional Amendment

Issue 3 will amend Ohio's Constitution to authorize only one casino facility within each of the cities of Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, and Toledo. It will levy a fixed tax of 33% of gross casino revenue received. The majority of tax proceeds will be distributed among all 88 counties in proportion to such counties' respective populations.

Pro Arguments

- Issue 3 creates first-class casinos that will provide 34,000 new Ohio jobs.
- Proposes to produce \$11 billion in economic impact over five years and generate \$651 million a year in tax revenue to be shared by all 88 counties, the eight largest cities, and every Ohio public school district.
- Proposes to provide \$200 million for state job training programs and mandate at least \$1 billion in new private investment to be spent on new casino facilities.
- Keeps money and tax revenues in Ohio. Over \$1 billion leaves Ohio each year when Ohioans travel to neighboring states' gambling facilities.

Con Arguments

- Ohio voters said NO to casino gambling four times over the past several years.
- Promotes addictive behavior that harms families and seduce gamblers, especially those with lower incomes. Studies have indicated that the problems of gambling addiction double when gambling opportunities are placed within 50 miles of the gambler.
- Will further incidents of crime (substance abuse, prostitution, assault and battery, etc.). Such crimes often increase around casinos.
- Misuses the Ohio Constitution. The Constitution should not be used as a tool for private companies to set up exclusive monopolies, take money out of Ohio, and exempt themselves from local zoning ordinances.

- The amendment is not well written. Many questions remain as to whether Issue 3 *may* ban all other casino gaming, including "casino nights" offered by churches, fraternal organizations or other charities, and whether casinos *may* be exempted from paying taxes on profits from cash wagering.

Church Teachings

Games and schemes of chance are not in themselves contrary to justice. The Church recognizes, however, that a variety of social ills can become associated with any form of gambling. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, forms of gambling "become morally unacceptable when they deprive someone of what is necessary to provide for his needs and those of others. The passion for gambling risks becoming an enslavement."

Previous Catholic Conference of Ohio statements on gambling made a distinction between charitable bingo and casino gambling. While there are a variety of social ills that can also be associated with charitable bingo, the gambling stakes are much lower and 100% of the proceeds are used for charitable purposes. The Catholic Bishops of Ohio would prefer, and in fact have encouraged, church institutions to raise needed funds through alternative forms of fundraising, where feasible.

Focus Question

Is Issue 3 well conceived and in the long-term best interest of the people of Ohio?



Catholic Conference of Ohio Position

A voter's position on Issue 3 involves a prudential judgment where persons of good will may differ as to the specifics of this proposal.

The Catholic Conference of Ohio has opposed all previous statewide casino and slot machine initiatives. The Catholic Bishops in Ohio continue to believe casino gambling, as proposed in Issue 3, is not in the best moral, social and economic interests of the citizens of our state. More persons and families will be seduced into financial hardship, rather than helped. More societal problems will be aggravated, rather than improved.

Furthermore, Issue 3 appears to us to be poorly written and overindulgent toward the gambling interests of private business. Since Issue 3 is a Constitutional amendment, voters have no recourse for fixing such concerns except to pass another Constitutional amendment. This flawed casino proposal should not be enacted into our Ohio Constitution.

The Catholic Bishops of Ohio are opposed to Issue 3.