



# Legislative Brief

Sept. 18, 2009

## CASINOS AND RACETRACK SLOTS ARE FILLED WITH EMPTY PROMISES!

Casino promoters wrote their own petition contract with Ohio's 88 counties and local governments. There was no bidding with other promoters guaranteeing the best percentage rate possible for Ohio's taxpayers. Penn National, who is sponsoring this ballot issue, ran television ads against the previous casino attempt by My Ohio Now to put a casino in Wilmington. They said that the 30% payoff to the counties was grossly unfair as the promoters were keeping 70%. Penn National also criticized the fact that they would be a monopoly keeping all competition out of Ohio. Today, Penn National only one year later is offering counties and local governments only 33% while they put 67% in their pockets. Penn National resides in Pennsylvania where they gave their Governor 55% for the opportunity to operate a casino in that state. Why should our taxpayers take a \$220 million cut and allow Penn National to have a complete monopoly to operate casinos in Ohio? Ohio voters are too smart to allow greedy promoters to pick Ohio's pockets.

The Penn National ballot issue does not promise to build in all four cities. This could be a ploy to get voters in the four largest urban cities in Ohio to support their proposal. Ask yourself, why would any company build a casino in Cincinnati, only 15 minutes away from their Argosy Casino in Indiana where they contend 60% of their business comes from southern Ohio?

Another empty promise has been uncovered by State Representative Lou Blessing R-Cincinnati. Lou advised the press that the Constitutional language written by the casino owners would provide an out if they decide that they don't want to pay 33% to Ohio's counties. The specific wording in the proposed casino amendment defines the casino's "gross revenues" as the total amount of money exchanged by patrons for chips, tokens, tickets and similar objects used to gamble. But there is no mention of cash, rather than using tokens or chips. Cash therefore is not subject to taxation by Ohio counties and can be taken by casino owners 100%. Cash is still the prime means of playing slot machines and they generally provide 70% of casino revenue. Casino owners contend that is not their intent. But remember, they are the ones who wrote the Constitutional amendment without any review required by the legislature or the administration. If their intent was to include all revenues in the makeup of the share to be paid to counties, why would they specifically

"Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God."

(Psalm 20: 4-5 NRSV)

**JOIN THE CAMPAIGN TO VOTE  
NO ON ISSUE 3  
SEND YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS  
TO ME AND I WILL SEE  
THAT YOU GET ADDED TO  
THE ISSUE 3 INFORMATION  
NETWORK THAT YOU MAY  
SHARE WITH OTHERS!**

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## Ohio IMPACT



have excluded cash as a part of their definition of “gross revenues” that is used to divide profits? I would also point out that this is a Constitutional amendment and if passed by the voters it can’t be changed by a statute passed by the legislature or by an Executive Order issued by the Governor.

If I haven’t already provided enough doubt about the credibility or greed of the casino promoters, the following action convinces most to cast a NO vote on Issue 3 in November. The amendment drafted by Penn National, the third largest gambling syndicate in the U.S. would ban charitable gambling by churches and other non-profit groups such as volunteer fire groups, VFW, fraternal organizations, etc. This was the opinion offered by Governor Ted Strickland and Attorney General Richard Cordray. Once again, the promoters argue that it wouldn’t impact those groups. However, their language specifically exempts bingo and horse racing from the definition of “casino gambling” that would be restricted to the four sites in the November ballot Issue 3. It does not, however, say anything about exempting casino-night fundraisers at churches and the other non-profit organizations that properly apply and meet the state requirements of the Secretary of State. These fundraisers are relatively common in Catholic churches to help subsidize low and middle income families send their children to their parochial schools for a Christian education.

When you have your turn to vote, please read the ballot board arguments against Issue 3. You will note that the specific argument approved by the ballot board makes the case that if Issue 3 is passed that churches and non-profit organizations would be excluded from their Las Vegas night fundraisers.

Jim Tobin, associate director of the Catholic Conference of Ohio, agrees with Rep. Blessing’s interpretation of Issue 3’s Constitutional amendment’s impact on their Las Vegas nights. Jim said, “It’s another reason why this is not a good proposal.” “How stupid are these guys, in their greed, to take a shot at the same people that might want to come to their casinos?”

The Ohio Council of Churches maintains its steadfast opposition to casino gambling because if it is placed in Ohio’s four largest cities, it will prey on those who can least afford to lose money. When those with sizeable disposable income travel across state lines to gamble, it reduces the possibility of addiction and protects lower income families from the foolish decision to risk their living expenses. However, placing casinos in the same communities as thousands of Ohioans opens the doors for addiction, bankruptcy, crime and other social problems. This is not a Christian methodology for funding government services. The vast majority of the leadership of the faith community has strongly opposed this type of expansion of gambling in our state.

The final look at the integrity of Penn National can be seen in a finding by the Illinois Gambling Board. They cited them with an \$800,000 fine for violating their gambling law by marketing to gambling addicts. They violated for a second time the self-exclusion program for problem gamblers. They rented a list of names from an ATM company at Illinois casinos. They mailed promotional material and coupons to entice some from the self-exclusion list to gamble in their establishment. Ohio can do better than the empty promises of Penn National. If you agree, encourage others to vote NO on Issue 3 on November 3rd. †††

