



Casino Gambling Position Statement
As approved by a majority of the board of directors in November, 2007

The Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce opposes the Administration's plan to license and approve the destination type Casinos in our state. The plan would allow for full resort-type facilities in Greater Boston, Western Massachusetts and Southeast Massachusetts. The facility in Southeast Massachusetts could be either in Middleboro or New Bedford and it would include significant meeting, performing arts, and hotel accommodations.

We oppose casino gambling specifically in our region for the following reasons:

1. We have both a year-round and seasonal labor shortage that fails to meet our current regional labor needs. A casino will exacerbate our labor shortage;
2. The casino's location within 25 miles of Cape Cod will draw visitors and travel and tourism dollars away from our economy; and
3. Our infrastructure is not prepared to accommodate a casino. We are currently wrestling with major infrastructure problems. The impact of a neighboring casino would only compound issues related to wastewater treatment, lack of affordable housing, traffic flow and congestion concerns and increasing local property taxes.

Background:

The Cape's economy is fundamentally a service and retail dynamic fueled by visitors, second homeowners and retirees who infuse our region with dollars earned elsewhere. Our economy grows when visitor spending increases, when people from elsewhere buy second homes and when retirees bring social security and pension checks with them as they decide to live in our beautiful communities. Technology services, fishing, farming and retail all directly and indirectly rely on this visitor industry. Casinos would take discretionary income out of our economy.

Our labor force basically swells from 100,000 to about 135,000 in our visitor season. This additional labor force is not easy to come by based on our aging demographics. We rely on a variety of seasonal workers to populate this additional 35,000 person need. Historically, 5000 to 6000 of these workers are H2B sanctioned foreign workers who benefit from work provided by our service establishments.

The threat to our local economy begins with tight labor availability in season, where hard won gains have been made by the Chamber's work and the work of individual business owners committing to the strict requirements of the government's foreign worker program. The proposed 20,000 "new jobs" are more than likely to be filled by employees who will come from existing businesses that will be hurt by casinos.

Additionally, resort casinos size and scale threaten certain segments of our visitor industry such as bus tours, meetings, touring performing arts acts and local restaurant and hotel business.

The Administration portrays this proposal as an economic development initiative that will provide for property tax relief and needed infrastructure capital. Critics are concerned that the revenue projections may be overly generous since there appears to be plans in neighbor states for additional facilities that would lead to a saturation point in the Northeast. Already there is evidence that lottery revenues are down and at least one of the Connecticut casinos has had flat revenue this past year.

There are also social costs and community costs that must be adequately addressed on a regional basis. While the issue is not a moral issue with the Chamber, there are a number of community costs that must be addressed when deliberating on this proposal such as a need for more police and emergency response personnel. As has been well documented, local crime rates have increased in nearly all regions where legalized gambling has been introduced, the costs of which are now just being realized.

As a regional business group, we believe that casino resorts are a revenue threat to our economy and to our small business' ability to function.