

## Lambert: Casinos have an 'unsavory influence' on community - Framingham, MA

Written by Administrator

Sunday, 16 September 2012 06:29 -

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Citing “vulnerability to unsavory influence,” Illinois Governor Pat Quinn vetoed a plan this summer to bring casinos to Chicago and four other areas in the Prairie State.

“We’re not going to have loopholes for mobsters in Illinois,” said Governor Quinn, who like Chicago mayor Rahm Emanuel is a Democrat. Quinn’s two predecessors are in prison for corruption. The windy city itself has a reputation of mobsters and corruption going back to the days of Al Capone.

The governor of this state won’t be emulating the action of the Illinois governor respecting proposed casino sites in our own larger Bay State cities. The locating of casinos here is pretty much out of his hands.

Nonetheless, our larger cities aren’t exactly invulnerable to unsavory influences either, and not just those of the gaming industry alone. They, too, have harbored mobsters and corruption over time---and still do.

Most notorious in recent times are the Winter Hill gang of Boston and Whitey Bulger in the eastern part of the state.

In the western part of the state, another proposed site for a casino is Springfield. That city has the unsavory distinction as a Mafia hub for criminal activity over a wide area.

Perhaps worse yet, higher officials of the state itself have bowed to “unsavory influences” and actions. Three Speakers of the House in succession have been convicted of various ethical lapses. Then there’s the legislator who was caught stuffing a bribe in her bra.

No, “vulnerability to unsavory influences” is not exactly absent in our Bay State. Indeed, a federal judge noted a “culture of corruption” pervades the Commonwealth.

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So now with the introduction of casinos, another layer of unsavory influence is laid in the state.

Governor Quinn of Illinois is right in his attempt to shield his most vulnerable communities from unsavory influences. Though the tawdry gaming industry poses as a wholesome adult entertainment medium, clearly it has not been so. It has always been and remains laden with allegations of prostitution, money laundering for criminals and foreign interests, bribery both in this country and other lands, wage and hour violations, abuses of our Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, short-changing taxes to governments, witness and jury tampering in legal proceedings and other illicit activities. And those may not be the worst.

Through the creation of a regulatory commission, elected officials purport to have distanced their offices from unsavory influences and conduct. That gaming commission is charged with the responsibility of curbing corrupt practices within the gaming industry.

The very creation of the commission speaks volumes of the industry's odiousness.

. Last summer, Colorado's governor found confidence in his state's gaming commission misplaced. That commission, unlike ours, has the power to fix the taxes on the state's casinos. When the body voted to severely slash those taxes, the public outcry prompted the governor to fire the entire commission and replace its members with new appointees. Who knows what would cause the loss of confidence in our own commission, given the pervasiveness of corruption found by a federal judge.

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