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New poll shows Mainers still backing Oxford

casino The results are similar to a poll two weeks ago, but opponents have yet to run a TV ad.

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Staff Writer

Maine voters would approve a casino in Oxford County if the election were held today, according to the latest Maine Poll.

The poll, conducted Sunday and Monday and released Wednesday afternoon, shows that 53 percent of likely voters support Question 1, which would allow a group of investors to build a casino in Oxford County. The results are nearly identical to those from a Maine Poll conducted two weeks ago.

Both polls were done for MaineToday Media by Critical Insights Inc. of Portland. The firm also conducts polling for a group that supports the casino question on Maine's Nov. 2 ballot.

The latest poll shows that 43 percent would oppose the casino and only 4 percent are undecided. It shows that support for the casino is highest among men, younger voters, unenrolled voters and those with less than a college degree.

The facility would be Maine's first casino with table games.

New poll shows Mainers still backing Oxford casino - Press Herald

Written by Administrator

Wednesday, 13 October 2010 23:06 -

Dennis Bailey of Casinos No! said he's encouraged by the poll even though his side is trailing by 10 percentage points. He said the political action committee that is pushing the casino, Maine Taxpayers Taking Charge, has been running an expensive advertising campaign while Casinos No! has yet to run a single television commercial. In the past two weeks, those who said they definitely would vote "no" went from 31 percent to 37 percent, while those who definitely would vote "yes" went from 42 percent to 43 percent.

Bailey said he expects that support for the casino will drop after Casinos No! begins running its own television ads. He said that will happen soon, but he declined to give any details.

"I'm not scared at all by this," he said. "Someone who has spent almost \$2 million in advertising and barely has over 50 percent tells me that Maine people are not sold on this idea yet."

Robert Lally Jr., treasurer of Maine Taxpayers Taking Charge, said the election will be close and his group will work to educate voters about the economic benefits that a casino would bring to Maine.

He said he expects a last-minute campaign blitz by casino opponents: "We expect that and are ready for it."

According to campaign finance reports released Wednesday, Maine Taxpayers Taking Charge has raised and spent \$2.1 million. The group has spent \$1.13 million on television advertising, \$277,000 on radio advertising, \$222,000 on a direct-mail campaign and \$69,000 on a telephone campaign.

Casinos No! has raised \$65,000 and spent \$68,000.

Citizens Against the Oxford Casino, a group that's funded by Penn National Gaming Inc., the owner of Hollywood Slots Hotel & Raceway in Bangor, has raised \$165,000 and spent \$115,000.

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The group opposes a casino in Oxford County because it says it would draw customers away from Hollywood Slots, which is not allowed by the state to have table games.

Oxford Hills NO on 1, a grass-roots group based in Norway, reported raising \$2,600.

Black Bear Entertainment, the company behind the casino proposal, is backed by several Maine investors who are contributing heavily to Maine Taxpayers Taking Charge.

Lally, co-owner of the Mount Abram ski resort, has contributed \$232,000. Rupert and Suzanne Grover, who founded Grover Gundrilling Inc. in Norway, have contributed \$210,000. Stephen Barber, former president of Barber Foods in Portland, and his wife, Mary Barber, have contributed \$218,000. Jim Boldebook, founder of Creative Broadcast Concepts in Biddeford, has contributed \$302,000.

Gary and Robert Bahre, former owners of Oxford Plains Speedway, have contributed \$864,000.

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