

Written by Administrator
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"This is one of the closest votes that we've seen, at least in my memory in the state of Maine, so I think that we owe it ourselves and also to Maine voters to explore the possibilities of a recount," says Dan Cashman, spokesman for Citizens Against the Oxford Casino, a coalition representing a number of interests, including Maine's Hollywood Slots in Bangor, a combined harness racing and slot machine facility, known as a "racino."

If a recount doesn't happen, Cashman says there are other plans to try to alter the proposal, which he believes is unfair to Maine's existing gambling industry.

"If it does go forward, looking at working with the Legislature to make this a fair bill, because otherwise it just sends a poor message to people from out-of-state and people in-state, that certain industries are not welcome to do business here and those that are here will be treated differently," Cashman says.

Citizens Against the Oxford Casino complain that the proposed gambling and hotel complex would create a monopoly, since it would be the only place in the state licensed to allow table gaming. They also point out that the bill gives the Oxford casino a lower tax rate than the Bangor racino, while another provision would not allow other gaming operations within a 100 mile radius.

"In any other industry this wouldn't make any sense, to have two facilities, and one of them is given a better set of rules to operate with than the other one," Cashman says.

Question 1's other main opponent is also considering the possibility of a recount. "We're going to wait and see what the final numbers are before we make that decision--we've got five days to make that decision," says long-time anti-gambling advocate Dennis Bailey, who heads up Casinos No!

Bailey says casinos are accompanied by damaging social and economic effects for their host communities. If a recount is not pursued, Bailey says the group may be challenging the proposal in other ways. "We've always felt that the way the law is written raises some, perhaps, legal issues, constitutional issues, that we may want to examine as well."

Bailey, who helped defeat casino proposals in Oxford in 2008 and in Sanford in 2003, admits

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that the Question 1 proponents "got their act together" this time. They also outspent opponents by a margin of about ten-to-one, shelling out more than \$3 million promoting the casino.

Both Dennis Bailey and Dan Cashman say one factor, especially, was instrumental in persuading Mainers to vote in favor of the Oxford County casino. "The economy and jobs was obviously a key issue," Bailey says.

"One of the major points that the "Yes" side brought forward was jobs, and of course everybody wants jobs," Cashman agrees.

"I say vote Yes for the Casino, I need the job," says Oxford County resident Winnie Bryce, who says she has to work two jobs--both of them outside her home town of Norway--to make ends meet. "I work at Walmart and I work at a place in Lewiston. So I work two jobs and I can't get two jobs in this area at all," Bryce says. "In the last 20 years I've seen at least eight places go down. Countless jobs leave, but none come in."

Another local resident, Dustin Kendall, also voted Yes on 1. In an area with a jobless rate of well over 10 percent, he says people are desperate for work. "There's nothing around here. Everything has gone away, with Burlington Homes closing down there's not enough jobs and we need more jobs and we need to bring people here, and if we had thought of another way to do it, I think they would have."

"The people listened to the message that we had about jobs, taxes and tourism. and I think we had a good position on all of those," says Rob Lally of Black Bear Entertainment, the investment group behind the planned casino. "We talked a lot about the good jobs that we'll create in Oxford and the entire state, the millions of dollars in tax revenue that will be generated from this program."

While opponents say a casino would suck money and jobs out of the economy, Rob Lally says the \$165 million casino and resort, will support more than 2,700 jobs and bring in more than \$60 million in tax revenue. Construction is expected to begin shortly.

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