



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Liz Krueger

## Sen. Krueger Joins Diverse Coalition to Unveil Campaign Against Proposal One, Constitutional Amendment Authorizing Casinos in New York State

LIZ KRUEGER November 1, 2013

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Joined on the steps of City Hall by State Senator Liz Krueger, a diverse coalition of political leaders, community groups, and advocates from around the state today announced their campaign urging voters to reject Proposal One. The Proposal's inclusion on the November ballot represents the final stage in the approval process for a proposed constitutional amendment authorizing gaming at up to seven casinos in New York State.

The coalition included several individuals and groups who do not often find themselves all on the same side of an issue, such as:

- State Senators Liz Krueger (D-Manhattan) and Kevin Parker (D-Brooklyn), Assemblymember Daniel O'Donnell (D-Manhattan), and Councilmember Gale Brewer (D-Manhattan)
- Mike Long, Chairman of the New York State Conservative Party
- Ramsay Adams, Executive Director of Catskill Mountainkeeper

Holding orange-and-black signs reading “Don’t Be Tricked / No to Casinos in NYC and NY State,” the coalition of community groups and advocates today announced their plans for an extensive outreach campaign against the amendment at subway stations and polling sites. (See attached leaflet and rewritten referendum language.)

They noted the campaign is in high gear already, with strong editorials against the proposal from The New York Times, New York Post, Albany Times Union and Watertown Daily Times. The Post said: “...legalized gambling is essentially a tax on the poor.”

“I came into this with an open mind, but this amendment and the accompanying legislation simply don’t address the obvious and justifiable concerns we should all have about expanding casino gaming in New York,” said Sen. Liz Krueger. “The proposed amendment and recently-passed companion legislation fail to ban political contributions from casino operators, and they do not adequately protect local communities’ right to control – or simply say no to – the siting of a new casino. Passing this would be asking for a new wave of political corruption and exposing many communities to the risk of having an unwanted casino inflicted on them.”

“We’re for appropriate economic development, not the kind that puts our communities at risk and jeopardizes the New York City watershed,” said Ramsay Adams, Executive Director of Catskill Mountainkeeper. “Putting Vegas-style casinos in the Catskills, New York City’s backyard and potential food basket, is the wrong way to go.”

“I believe the wording in this proposal is the biggest hoax ever perpetrated on the citizens of New York,” said Conservative Party Chairman Mike Long. “New Yorkers cannot gamble their way to prosperity; gambling is not a path to economic growth.”

“When the New York State Assembly recently voted on whether or not to amend our state constitution and allow ‘up to seven’ full casinos in New York State, I was proud to vote ‘No,’” said Assemblymember Daniel O’Donnell. “On November 5th, this decision comes before all voters of New York State. I believe this amendment is a short-term, irresponsible attempt to fix some of our state’s long-term economic problems; a ‘Yes’ is a vote to completely ignore the vast and very real negative consequences which will result should this amendment be passed, in favor of dreams of riches that will most likely not materialize.”

“The people of New York are being sold a bill of goods. During this period of high unemployment, we are promised that gambling is a panacea to our problems. We’re simply preying on our own people – the very people who do not have the economic wherewithal to gamble. This is the wrong choice for New York State. The social costs associated with the expansion of casinos in New York outweigh the economic costs. We ought to be saving our hospitals and not expanding casinos. That’s the right choice for New York,” said Sen. Kevin Parker.

“I oppose casino gambling because it isn’t smart economic development policy. Research shows that the social costs outweigh benefits by about 3 to 1,” said Sen. Brad Hoylman. “It’s as they say about gambling, it would be the surest way of getting nothing for something.”

“I brought my lawsuit because the Board of Elections drafted the advocacy language in Proposition 1 without authority, with the intent to persuade voters and did not openly approve the language at a public meeting,” said Eric Snyder, the Brooklyn resident who brought the lawsuit against the Board of Elections to halt the referendum due to violations of the Open Meetings law, Election Law and the State Constitution.

Other jurisdictions’ experience indicates that when casinos come to town, problem gambling increases, low-income people are victimized, lower-paying jobs are the norm, and nearby businesses often do not reap significant benefits from the presence of the casino, and can even suffer losses instead. Opponents of Proposal One cited the following concerns:

- **Problem Gambling.** Australian and Canadian academic studies show that as much as 62 percent of gambling revenues comes from problem gamblers, most of them earning \$50,000 or less. Many opponents feel the proposed amendment and implementing legislation does not do enough to minimize the encouragement of problem gambling or fund programs to combat the problem.
- **Crime and Corruption.** Richard Aborn, who advised former NYPD Commissioner Bill Bratton, has outlined how the gaming industry increases crime and corruption in “Gambling: Who’s Really at Risk,” and the gaming industry has already poured \$59 million into legislators’ campaign coffers.
- **Jeopardizing the Environment and New York City’s Water Supply.** Secondary development near Catskill casinos would likely encroach on the New York City watershed, in addition to endangering a number of habitats for threatened species. The increased risk of pollution and attendant need for water filtration, which would be an enormously expensive new undertaking.
- **Fair Revenue Distribution.** Many have raised concerns that the implementing legislation does not ensure a fair distribution of gambling revenue that truly compensates local

communities for the burdens imposed by the nearby presence of new casinos.

- **New York City Could Be Next.** Subsequent legislation could result in three of the seven casino licenses being assigned to New York City – perhaps without local approval or even without compliance with local zoning.

Other referendum opponents in attendance included representatives of summer camp organizations in Sullivan County, many of them from religious Jewish communities. They – and most of the amendment’s opponents – oppose the expansion of casino gambling because it comes with more than its share of potential problems, with some opponents urging that these problems be addressed in the referendum and implementing legislation.