

RELIGIOUS LEADER'S RESOLUTION

ON OPENING A CASINO IN BUFFALO, N.Y.

Released October 5, 2005

We are religious leaders of Buffalo and Erie County who are deeply troubled by the continuing efforts of the Seneca Nation of Indians, Mayor Anthony Masiello and several local developers to open a gambling casino within the city of Buffalo, particularly in downtown or on the waterfront. Touting dubious claims of economic salvation for Buffalo, several local officials and developers continue to press for the Seneca Nation of Indians to build a third gambling casino in Buffalo. They ignore the disproportionate harm a casino will do to the poor and most vulnerable of our community, and the long term damage it will do to our local economy. We truly believe casino gambling to be a very bad bet for the City of Buffalo and its residents.

WE ARE FURTHER CONCERNED THAT:

- Neither the citizens of Buffalo nor the citizens of Erie County have had a voice in determining whether a casino should be built in Buffalo or Erie County. This is a denial of the most basic right of democracy.
- Gambling addiction, which is already high in our region, particularly among our youth and elderly, will likely double, and lead to an increase in bankruptcy, crime and family violence. This has been the conclusion of every independent scholar who has studied addiction.
- A casino will have a detrimental effect on local restaurants, stores and other businesses leading to business failures and reduced sales tax income. This has been the experience of other communities with casinos including Atlantic City, N.J, and Niagara Falls, N.Y.
- A casino will seriously hinder the future development of Buffalo. As the Most Rev. Edward U. Kmiec, Bishop of the Diocese of Buffalo has said, "Our real claim to fame, our architectural heritage, the waterfront, museums, our important place in history, and our family-oriented community, will be sacrificed for this quick fix."
- Following construction of a casino in Buffalo, eminent domain may be used by the Seneca Nation of Indians to acquire additional adjacent property for development. This will remove even more valuable property from the tax rolls of Buffalo and Erie County, further compounding our economic problems. The role of government in opening a casino in Buffalo represents very bad public policy.

Guided by the purposes of the Network of Religious Communities, which calls us to work together for justice, peace and the common good, and by the Sacred Scriptures of our various religious traditions, which teach us to place the welfare of the poor and most vulnerable first,

WE THEREFORE:

1. Call upon the religious and congregational leaders of the City of Buffalo and Erie County to speak out against the opening of a gambling casino in the City of Buffalo or anywhere in Erie County.
2. Call upon the members of congregations of Buffalo and Erie County to contact the mayor of the city of Buffalo, members of the Buffalo Common Council and members of the Erie County Legislature and other public officials to express their opposition to the opening of a Casino in the City of Buffalo or anywhere in Erie County.
3. Call upon Mayor Anthony Masiello to reverse his support for the building of a casino in downtown Buffalo and to devote his attention to real economic development for the City of Buffalo.
4. Call upon other community leaders, and those seeking public office, to declare their opposition to the opening of a casino in the City of Buffalo.
5. Call upon the Seneca Nation of Indians to respect the core values of the people of Buffalo and Erie County and end their plans to open a casino in downtown Buffalo or any other location in the County of Erie.

SIGNERS OF CASINO RESOLUTION AS OF OCTOBER 5, 2005

DENOMINATIONS/FAITH COORDINATING BODIES

Buffalo/Rochester District African Methodist Zion Churches

Rev. Robert Williams, Ruling Elder

Church of Jesus Christ Latter Day Saints

Dr Stephen Free, President, Buffalo Stake

Council of Orthodox Christian Churches

Father Peter Jackson, President

Diocese of Buffalo.

Most Reverend Edward U Kmiec, Bishop

Rev. Paul A. Litwin, JCL, Vice Chancellor.

Episcopal Diocese of Western New York

The Rev. Allen Farabee, Official Representative.

Hindu Cultural Society

Dr Vijayaraghavan Chakravarthy, President

Mennonite Mission Network

Rev. John Powell and Rev. Joe Haines

Network of Religious Communities

Imam Fajri Ansari, President.

Islamic Society of the Niagara Frontier

Dr. Othman Shibly

Presbytery of Western New York

Rev. Stephen Phelps, Chair, General Council

Religious Society of Friends, Buffalo Meeting

Susan A. Tannehill

Sikh Societ of the Niagara Frontier

Dr. Surjit Singh

United Church of Christ, New York Conference

Rev. David Felton, Western Regional Conference Minister

United Methodist Church, New York West Area

The Rev. Violet L. Fisher, Bishop

Upstate New York Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Rev. Timothy Madsen, Ecumenical Officer.

Western New York Churches in Covenant (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ)

The Rev. Amos Acree, Immediate Past Moderator

Rev. Arthur R. Davis, Ecumenical Officer

Western New York Conference, African Methodist Episcopal Church

Rev. Richard Stenhouse

Other organizations.

Bible Society of Western New York

Rev. Marjorie Neal

Calvary Christian Methodist Episcopal Church

Ms Eula Hooker

Church Women United

Norma Roscover, President

Ephesus Ministries

Rev. Jeff Carter, Pastor

Pilgrim St. Luke United Church of Christ

Rev Bruce McKay, Pastor

Rev. Robert Grimm

Masjid Nu'man

Imam Fajri Ansari

Muslim Public Affairs Council of Western New York

Dr. Khalid Qazi, President

Riverside Salem United Church of Christ

The Rev. Dr. Keneth Neal

St Paul's Episcopal Cathdral

Rt. Rev. J. C. Fricker, Interim Dean.

Rev. Ethan J. Cole.

Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity (Stella Niagara)

Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo

Rev. Joel Miller, Minister.