



INTERNATIONAL UNION, UNITED AUTOMOBILE, AEROSPACE & AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENT WORKERS OF AMERICA-UAW

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**S.B. 419, An Act Prohibiting Smoking in Regulated Areas of Casinos
Testimony of Robert Madore, Director UAW Region 9A
February 29, 2008**

Good afternoon, Senator Handley, Representative Sayers and Members of the Public Health Committee. I am Bob Madore, Director of UAW Region 9A representing workers in the New England states, part of New York State and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

I want to thank the chairs for raising this important bill. You and your colleagues have an opportunity, through enacting this bill, to save lives of both patrons and workers who are getting sick as a result of secondhand smoke. I urge you to vote this bill out of committee.

For over a year now, the UAW has been working with the dealers at Foxwoods – helping them to form a union. Secondhand smoke has been one of their biggest concerns. Previous efforts by dealers to resolve the issue with management have failed completely. In fact, conditions for table games dealers have worsened in recent years.

The UAW at Foxwoods organizing committee had the opportunity to talk one on one with more than two thousand dealers in the months prior to the union vote. Getting rid of smoking at the gaming tables was the one issue with universal support – from smokers and non-smokers, union supporters and even those who opposed unionization.

Today, you have heard workers describe serious illnesses – asthma, cancer and general ill health – caused by working in an environment with secondhand smoke.

You have heard doctors and experts on secondhand smoke testify that this is not only concern for the casino workers, but it is also a public health issue for patrons who go to the casinos regularly. Testing at the casinos, even testing in non-smoking areas, reveal secondhand smoke levels five to seven times higher than what is considered safe air quality.

You have heard testimony regarding gaming industry trending to 100% smoke-free operations. Concerns regarding revenue losses have been disproved by independent studies that show little to no economic impact in states that have banned smoking in gaming facilities.

Perhaps most important to many of you, testimony from our state's most prestigious institution of higher learning, Yale University, confirms that the legislature is on firm legal ground in expanding the state's current smoking ban to include casinos. We also know that the Attorney General has been asked to provide the legislature with a formal opinion on this issue. We expect this opinion to be similar to that of our colleagues at Yale.

There is no question that it would have been much preferable if the tribes had stopped smoking at the casinos voluntarily. But they didn't. We ask you now to please consider these facts:

- There is undeniable evidence that secondhand smoke is dangerous to people's health – secondhand smoke kills.
- Foxwoods and Mohegan Sun casinos are the largest employers in the state. Workers in southeastern Connecticut have few alternatives to employment. Dealers in southeastern Connecticut really have no choice but to work at the casinos or move out of state.

This is personal. Too many of us have lost loved ones who have suffered from cancer or asthma. I myself am a cancer survivor. We can't ignore the magnitude of this issue. This is also a matter of leadership. The power is in your hands to make a difference. I urge you to listen to your conscience. Do the right thing. Take bold steps. I urge you to vote to make casinos in Connecticut smoke free. Thank you.

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