



State of Connecticut

SENATE

SENATOR TONY HWANG

TWENTY-EIGHTH SENATE DISTRICT

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
300 CAPITOL AVENUE, SUITE 3400
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591
CAPITOL: (800) 842-1421
E-MAIL: Tony.Hwang@cga.ct.gov
WEBSITE: www.SenatorHwang.com

ASSISTANT MINORITY LEADER

RANKING MEMBER
HOUSING COMMITTEE
LABOR & PUBLIC EMPLOYEES COMMITTEE

MEMBER
COMMERCE COMMITTEE
VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

April 13, 2015

Testimony by Senator Tony Hwang and Former Congressman Robert Steele in Opposition to H.B. 7054

Esteemed members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee:

We wish to testify in opposition to H.B. No. 7054, a bill to permit the introduction of keno games to be sold by the Connecticut Lottery Corporation, subject to agreement with the Mashantucket Pequot and Mohegan Tribes. While the bill would provide the Connecticut Lottery Corporation greater flexibility in marketing gambling games, it would further spread the damaging effects of casino-type gambling across the state.

Connecticut is already home to two of the world's biggest casinos. H.B. 7054 would result in a significant expansion of casino-type gambling by introducing a highly addictive gambling game to thousands of locations, including restaurants, where children will be present, and bars and taverns, which will deliberately mix dining, drinking and betting.

A similar legislative proposal last year to legalize keno projected that it could generate up to \$28 million a year in revenue. But those revenues would not even begin to be worth the economic, social, and public health costs. To begin with, every cent of keno revenue would come from the gambling losses of keno players, providing the state with no net economic gain. Moreover, the latest research shows that today's electronic and machine gambling technology is increasingly addictive, creating a host of problems, including debt, bankruptcy, broken families, and crime. A study of keno in New York State found that it led to a sharp increase in minority betting, while it has been well-documented that legalized gambling is a regressive tax that hits low-wage earners, minorities, and retirees the hardest.

The most recent Quinnipiac University poll on keno found that 59 percent of Connecticut residents opposed the legalization of keno. Connecticut's media has overwhelmingly opposed its legalization over the past two years. And last year Governor Malloy, the House Speaker, and the Senate President Pro Tem all disavowed their earlier support for keno.

More gambling is not an answer to Connecticut's economic problems. Instead of encouraging our citizens to gamble away their savings, we need to attract productive, living-wage jobs, promote stable revenue streams and end the runaway spending that's put the state so deeply in debt.