

**SCHAGHTICOKE TRIBAL NATION
PUBLIC HEARING COMMENTARY & TESTIMONY
MARCH 17, 2015
PUBLIC SAFETY & SECURITY COMMITTEE**

**SENATOR LARSON, (Chair)
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Members of the PUBLIC SAFETY & SECURITY COMMITTEE

My name is Richard Velky and I am the Chief of the Schaghticoke Tribal Nation of Kent, CT, a Tribe duly recognized by the State of Connecticut with a dedicated Reservation located in Kent since early colonial times. I was elected Chief for life in 1987 along with a duly elected and active 8 member Tribal Council.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak on Raised Bill No. 1090, AN ACT CONCERNING GAMING. I will raise several concerns and questions that appear to be short comings in the proposal.

FIRST, WITH RESPECT TO FREE-TRADE

Does this legislation as drafted restrain free-trade? How does CT protect against time and money-consuming lawsuits from commercial gaming companies who would see this bill as restraining interstate commerce and potentially being Anti-Trust in nature? Or, if it is a tribal gaming oriented law, will it automatically accommodate other tribes as they become Federally recognized, or will that just lead to latent litigation?

SECOND, AS TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Is this legislation really about jobs or about maintaining the wealth of some very protected gaming companies? What guarantees do CT residents have that our citizens will be the majority of employees hired? Will all the employees be new hires or just shifting excess personnel from existing casino's? If the two tribes seeking off reservation gaming were so motivated to create CT based employment, why were they actively seeking licenses in multiple Massachusetts locations that would have potentially reduced employment and tax revenues here in CT? Has your Committee performed any studies to determine the impact of gaming across our borders in MA, NY and RI and potential revenue loss here?

Are there any demographic, economic, or employment studies that have been prepared relating to any proposed gaming location? There is little, if any, indication that any highway, traffic, public safety, police, fire, health care or any impact on residential and existing commercial businesses studies have or are to be performed. If not, why not? Will the proposed enactment date of mid-October provide sufficient time for thoughtful review and input of such studies?

Finally, there are significant questions and uncertainties as to whether these would be tribal casinos, commercial casinos, or quasi-commercial casinos and the legal ramifications that would result there from. There is little, if any, definition relating to a template for state taxation protocols, expectations, and/or projections of tax revenues. But as proposed, there is a pronounced lack of guidance relating to the authority and responsibilities of the Department of Consumer Protection and other agencies.

IN CONCLUSION

Some may ask about STN, its past and its future. There are proposed regulations pending before the Department of the Interior/Bureau of Indian Affairs that would serve to promote federal recognition. How can Raised Bill 1090 be crafted before the final BIA rules on recognition are published should be of serious concern.

If the State of CT currently is in possession of information concerning the contours of those BIA rules will it share them with the public now to provide a clearer basis for its thinking on this legislation with regard to having only two specified tribes, when the upcoming BIA rules may allow several more federal recognitions of CT tribes this year? Federal recognition would provide educational, health care, elderly housing, and economic opportunities. Clearly, enabling the two tribes seeking ancillary venues would adversely impact those tribes economic alternatives.

Finally, it should be noted that regardless of what you may have heard on TV, radio, or read in the newspapers, as Chief of Schaghticoke Tribal Nation, I state emphatically, for the record, STN neither seeks nor would we construct a gaming facility of any sort on our ancestral reservation in Kent.

These points briefly address questions and concerns from STN perspective. I will follow up later this week with other and more detailed questions and concerns for your consideration and the record.

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