



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

DENNIS WILLIAMS, President



JULIE KUSHNER
DIRECTOR
REGION 9A UAW
111 SOUTH ROAD
FARMINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06032-2560
PHONE: (860) 674-0143
FAX: (860) 674-1164
PRINTED IN U.S.A.

GARY CASTEEL, Secretary-Treasurer

Public Hearing
Public Safety Committee
Testimony Presented by Julie Kushner, Director, UAW Region 9A
SB 1090 AAC Gaming – Support

Good afternoon Senator Larson, Representative Dargan and Members of the Public Safety Committee. My name is Julie Kushner and I am the Director of UAW Region 9A which has more than 50,000 members in all of the New England states, New York City, and Puerto Rico. Our membership is very diverse including legal aid attorneys and staff, technical and office professionals, childcare workers, employees at institutions of higher education, light manufacturer workers, and casino dealers. Most relevant to this proposal is UAW's representation of more than 1,500 dealers at Foxwoods Resort and Casino.

I am here to thank you for raising this proposal which would allow for up to three new casinos to be built in Connecticut and to urge your support. With increased competition from neighboring states, we believe it is imperative for Connecticut to act quickly to retain both direct and indirect casino business and jobs, give Connecticut's loyal casino patrons more options for gambling in their state, and protect state revenue.

In 2008, you may remember, UAW and the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe reached a historical agreement to bargain a first contract under amended tribal law without waiving any of the worker's rights under federal labor law. In January of 2010, workers voted by a 3 to 1 margin to ratify their first contract establishing the country's first casino dealer contract negotiated under Tribal law.

Union membership has allowed Foxwoods dealers to significantly improve their wages, benefits and working conditions. These dealers are highly skilled and go through extensive training to become proficient at their trade. With a union contract they also have a process for voicing their opinions, concerns and thoughts at work without fear of retaliation.

You may also remember, however, that one of the biggest issues faced by these dealers, and all of Foxwoods workers is that of exposure to second hand smoke. In 2010, in fact, we passed a bill in the State Senate that would have banned smoking in the state's two casinos.

Unfortunately, we were unable to pass it in the House, but were successful in raising awareness about the dangers of second hand smoke exposure to workers in this industry. We supported casino development in Massachusetts and demanded that those casinos be smoke free - and they are - as are casinos in New York and increasingly in other states across the country. We have tried to address second hand smoke exposure in collective bargaining, but we know the only way to truly protect casino workers is by banning smoking entirely from their places of employment.

To that end, we are providing the committee chairs with substitute language that would require these three new casinos be smoke free. The UAW would be loathe to support any casino expansion proposal that does not fulfill this requirement because we know the harm it causes the workers and the customers.

The state's casinos have not been spared from the downturn in the economy. In the last five years, the Foxwoods dealer workforce has decreased by more than a thousand workers. There is no question in our mind, that without expansion in Connecticut, the casinos to be built in Massachusetts will further negatively impact direct and indirect casino jobs in our state.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to working with you, members of the two Tribes and other allies because I think we can all agree that Connecticut Jobs Matter.

Thank you.

JK/cg
opeiu494