



**Connecticut Conference
United Church of Christ**

125 Sherman Street
Hartford, CT 06105-6004

**Testimony in Opposition to Senate Bill 1090:
An Act Concerning Gaming
Submitted by: Michele Mudrick, Legislative Advocate
Connecticut Conference, United Church of Christ
March 17, 2015**

Senator Larson, Representative Dargan, and distinguished members of the Public Safety and Security Committee,

I am Michele Mudrick, Legislative Advocate for the Connecticut Conference, United Church of Christ, and I am writing today in opposition to Senate Bill 1090: An Act Concerning Gaming to protect Connecticut jobs and to encourage tourism by allowing the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe and the Mohegan Tribe of Indians of Connecticut to operate casinos in the state.

I am writing on behalf of the 240 congregations and more than 73,000 people in our state's churches. In fact, the United Church of Christ (UCC) is the largest Protestant denomination in Connecticut. Nationally, the UCC has more than 5,700 congregations with nearly 1 million members. In 1977, in 1979, and again in 1994, the assembled delegates and ministers of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ met and voted on Resolutions that call upon the Connecticut Conference to oppose expansion of gambling.

Adding additional casinos in the state could increase pathological, compulsive, and addictive gambling. Pathological/compulsive/addictive gambling is a mental health disorder and the most severe form of problem gambling. It is a persistent, maladaptive gambling behavior that compromises, disrupts, and damages personal, family, or vocational pursuits leading to serious adverse consequences. Some of the major characteristics of a pathological gambling problem include: obsession with gambling; a need to bet more money and to bet more frequently, especially when chasing losses; restlessness or irritability when unable to gamble or attempting to stop; and thoughts of desperate ways to obtain money.¹

Gambling becomes a problem when the person's life is negatively impacted in some way. These include conflict in relationships with family members, friends or co-workers, gambling debt, and physical or mental health signs of stress or distress. A gambling problem can devastate the lives of the individual, family, friends, co-workers, employers, and community. A person who has a gambling problem is at a higher risk for trouble with alcohol or other drugs and vice versa. Two million (1%) American adults are estimated to meet criteria for pathological gambling in a given year. Another 4 - 8 million (2 - 4%) are estimated to be problem gamblers. In Connecticut, it is estimated that 180,000 members of the population (6%) meet the criteria for problem or pathological gambling.²

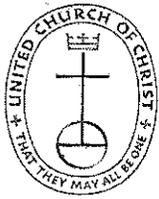
How much gambling is enough or how much is too much? This important point needs to be taken into consideration. The answer seems to be that there is never enough gambling if the state has a budget deficit. There needs to be more focus on the social costs of gambling, not just the financial gain. The people have spoken in a recent Quinnipiac University poll released on March 11, 2015, that three in four Connecticut voters oppose having more casinos in Connecticut.

¹ Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling

² Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling

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Because of the many ill effects of gambling, the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ opposes Senate Bill 1090: An Act Concerning Gaming.

Thank you for your work and for the opportunity to supply written testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 1090.

Blessings,
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