



**Connecticut Conference
United Church of Christ**

125 Sherman Street
Hartford, CT 06105-2281

**Testimony in Opposition to S.B. 957: An Act Concerning the Regulation of Gaming and the
Authorization of a Casino Gaming Facility in the State and;
Testimony in Opposition of H. B. 7239: An Act Providing for the Regulation of Gaming to Protect
Public Safety and a Competitive Process to Issue a Gaming License and;
Testimony in Opposition to S.B. 967: An Act Concerning Online Multijurisdictional Lottery
Games
Submitted by, Michele Mudrick, Legislative Advocate,
Connecticut Conference, United Church of Christ, March 9, 2017**

Representative Verrengia, Senator Guglielmo, Senator Larson, 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 Executive Director of the Coalition Against Casino Expansion in Connecticut.

Our Coalition against Casino Expansion is a group of 14 faith communities and organizations representing over a million people in Connecticut. Our Coalition spans a broad range of progressive and conservative viewpoints. We have joined together in a non partisan alliance to oppose the legalization of off reservation commercial casino gambling. We have come together to urge that no new casinos be built in our state. I am writing today in opposition to S.B 957, H.B. 7239 and S.B. 967.

I am also writing on behalf of the 237 congregations and more than 67,500 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 1974, 1977, 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 which call upon the Connecticut Conference to oppose expanding gambling including opposition to expansion of the lottery.

We are in opposition to S.B. 957: An Act Concerning the Regulation of Gaming and the Authorization of a Casino Gaming Facility in the State. The Institute of American Values published a report entitled "Why Casinos Matter: Thirty-One Evidence-Based Propositions from the Health and Social Sciences." This report was created by the Council on Casinos, an independent, nonpartisan group of scholars and leaders who joined together to examine the role of casinos in American life.¹

This report's research shows that gambling is highly addictive, that casinos depend on problem gamblers for their revenue, that living close to a casino increases your chance of becoming a problem gambler, that the benefits of casinos are short-term and easy to measure while the costs are longer-term and harder to measure. Furthermore, casinos drain wealth from communities, weaken nearby business, hurt property values, reduce civic participation, increase the risk of broken families and increase crime and bankruptcy in communities.²

¹ Institute for American Values

² Institute for American Values



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Gambling hits low-income earners, retirees, the mentally ill, and the unemployed the hardest, populations that are already suffering from economic inequality. Casinos are made for people to lose their money. The casino's business model is dependent on preying on people with gambling problems and up to half of the money our state obtains from casinos is derived from problem gamblers. There is no justice in using addictive gambling machines to obtain revenue from these most vulnerable populations.

According to Earl Grinols, the leading expert on the study of casinos in communities, there are many hidden social costs of gambling. These costs include crime costs, business and employment costs, bankruptcy costs, suicide costs, illnesses related to pathological gambling, social service costs, and family costs. Earl Grinols says these costs outweigh the benefits 3 to 1.³

We are also in opposition to H.B. 7239 for the very reasons mentioned above.

We are also in opposition to S.B 967. This would not only increase the promotion of lottery games, but would be a major step toward authorizing online casino-type gambling in Connecticut, which is the most addictive form of gambling.

All of God's children deserve opportunities to live and thrive in their communities and putting a casino in a community is not a way people can thrive.

The members of the Coalition Against Casino Expansion in Connecticut include:
Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ – Episcopal Church in Connecticut – Connecticut League of Women Voters – Connecticut Catholic Conference -- Family Institute of Connecticut – New England Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America – Connecticut Association for Human Services – Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport – Advocacy Unlimited, Inc. – Farmington Valley American Muslim Center and Bridgeport Islamic Community Center - Resident Bishop New England Conference of the United Methodist Church – American Baptist Churches of Connecticut – Presbytery of Southern New England

Thank you for your work and the opportunity to supply written testimony in opposition to S.B. 957, H.B. 7239 and S. B. 967 and I would be happy to answer any questions.

Blessings,
Michele Mudrick
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³ The Hidden Social Costs of Gambling



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