

## Lansing State Journal editorial

### **Casinos: Rogers' moratorium bid pushes regulatory needle the wrong way**

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Imposing more limits on casinos in Michigan will reduce consumer choices, further inject government into the marketplace and eventually harm the public interest - including the potential for a casino in downtown Lansing.

Yet U.S. Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Brighton, says on his Web site ([www.mikerogers.house.gov](http://www.mikerogers.house.gov)) that his "first order of business" this year is a two-year moratorium on new Indian casinos nationwide. Rogers argues the moratorium - and new federal restrictions on how tribes can open casinos - are needed in the wake of "scandals being reported in the news media today."

Presumably, this refers to the scandal around lobbyist Jack Abramoff, who took millions of dollars from tribal interests to influence government decisions. Quite troubling.

However, Abramoff's work was designed to limit casino competition. He got his tribal funds in battles over closing or blocking tribal casinos. The problem isn't with more casinos, but rather with the political interventions from Capitol Hill - interventions pushed by existing casinos worried about competition.

In 2004, Michigan went through a similar struggle with Proposal 1. Voters - wrongly - were persuaded by an unlikely combo of casino money and religious figures to require statewide and local votes to allow any new, non-Indian casinos in the state.

A big hole in Prop 1 was highlighted in recent weeks as one Michigan tribe won a federal court decision in its drive to open a casino in New Buffalo Township. And federal courts are weighing a similar legal challenge to another tribe's bid for a casino near Battle Creek. So Prop 1 hasn't limited gambling in Michigan, only bolstered the interests of existing casinos, non-Indian or not.

Now comes Rogers with his moratorium idea, a bid that seems more calculated to play to the Republican political base of social conservatives than anything else.

Michigan has signed off on casinos. The best thing lawmakers - state and federal - can do now is let the marketplace produce the broadest array of choice and competition in this industry, just as in any other industry.