

The Allegan County News



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The Commercial Record



The Plainwell & Otsego

Union Enterprise

Quit focusing on gambling

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To the editor: Over the years the local newspapers have printed seemingly hundreds of letters from members of Michigan Gambling Opposition. One news story I read recently put their complaints into the proper perspective.

Last month The Grand Rapids Press reported that nearly one in six children in nearby Kent County lived in poverty in 2006. The county experienced an awful 77-percent increase in child poverty from 2000 to 2006. Statewide, Michigan saw an increase of 43 percent child poverty over the same time period.

Here in Allegan County the number of children ages 5 to 17 living in poverty increased 36 percent from 2000 to 2004. This is simply unacceptable.

The Press report quoted Andy Zylstra, director of Kent County's Department of Human Services, saying, "More of your middle-class jobs, the kind that really fueled the economy in the past, those jobs are disappearing."

Our state's unemployment rate is the worst in the entire country, and local residents are suffering because there are not enough good-paying jobs with health care benefits. Not because everyone is spending all his or her money at a casino—that doesn't even exist!

With such grave problems being caused by poverty and loss of jobs, why are MichGO and 23 is Enough members so fixated on gambling issues? What about the terrible suffering caused by unemployment?

No one can argue that the casino will not create jobs that will support many families that desperately need good-paying jobs with benefits.

If Gun Lake Casino opponents really want the best for our region, they should stop delaying thousands of jobs that are dependent on the casino opening.

Steve Smalla
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