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Thursday August 16, 2007

County casino foes favor Grand Rapids interests

Wednesday, August 15, 2007 12:17 PM EDT

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To the editor: We are so disgusted with Sen. Patty Birkholz. We've voted for her since the beginning of her political career but will not in the future.

Where does she get the information that the Gun Lake Casino would hurt Grand Rapids? Why does she seem to represent Grand Rapids and not the people of Allegan County, who gave her their loyalty in votes? To favor GR's economic position over that of her home is so disappointing.

One can try to understand this when we realize she can not run for her current position again. She may be padding her bets for a future political career move.

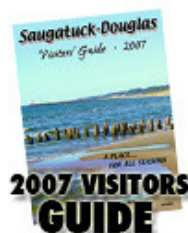
People who live and work at Manistee's Little River Casino tell us it offers the best-paying jobs in the county. Allegan County needs jobs. Good-paying jobs would help everyone, including Grand Rapids as people with disposal income would (and do) go there to shop.

We are sick of our elected officials using "moral" excuses to vote against any casino. The state encourages gambling with lottery games (135 at last count) ranging from \$1 to \$20. They even put Keno games in restaurants and bars.

People are going to gamble. If they don't go a casino, they will gamble online, buy lottery tickets, play in a sports pool at work or in a bar. Bottom line: if they want to gamble, they will. To deny Native Americans the opportunity to do exactly what the state is already doing is a travesty, since we took all this land away from them in the first place.

Rep. Fulton Sheen reported a "poll" indicated the majority of Allegan County residents do not want a casino. A "poll" of whom? His family and friends? No one we know has been "polled"—not by mail, by telephone or in person.

How can he make that kind of statement with a straight face? Oh, we forget, he is a politician.



Sheen also said crime will increase with presence of a casino. Will that not also happen in GR if a casino is built there, as Peter Secchia wants? Why is a casino a plus when it's in GR but negative in Allegan County?

Native American casinos have their own tribal police to help local police departments if crime increases, which has not been proved yet.

And a "proposed toll" to enter such a casino is ridiculous! Then there should be a "toll" to enter any casino—not just the Indian ones. And why not a "toll" (tax) to play the state's legalized gambling venues? Come on, fair is fair.

We encourage our Senate to do the right thing and approve the compact. If the Gun Lake Casino will be anything like the Little River or Four Winds casinos, it can only help Allegan County and thereby the state.

*Dean and Kathy Johnson
Douglas*

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