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[From the Lansing State Journal]

Bryan Newland: Casino critics keep odd company

Recent commentaries have appeared in the LSJ from west Michigan anti-casino groups. I would like to set the record straight for Lansing readers.

The LSJ got it right by editorially characterizing Rep. Mike Rogers' proposed Indian gaming reforms as misguided, and little more than political pandering to the conservative base.

In an obvious attempt to cover for Rep. Rogers, anti-casino zealots such as members of "23 is Enough," MichGo, and CETAC ran to the LSJ opinion pages. Readers should be highly skeptical of these groups, which are headquartered far away from Lansing. They have a checkered past, indeed.

Advertisement Both MichGo and CETAC have received assistance from the Blue Chip riverboat casino to delay proposed tribal casinos in southwest Michigan in order to prevent competition. All three anti-casino groups participated heavily in Proposal 1, knowing full well that casinos were bankrolling the measure to protect their interests.

These folks attempt to sell us their convictions that gambling is evil, yet they accept assistance from casinos. They will say and do anything, regardless of how disingenuous or misleading.

Rogers would be well advised to steer clear of these types.

However, if reform to prevent money from influencing the political process is truly what Rogers seeks, he should simply lead by example and disband his own untraceable "527" fund. This way, his constituents can be assured that he is not taking money from groups that are only interested in stopping competition, not the spread of casinos.

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Bryan Newland lives in Okemos.

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