

# Editorial board should have met with casino backers

## GUEST OPINION



DAVID SPRAGUE

no, using the long-time legal counsel of an Indiana riverboat casino concerned about competition. Another West Michigan tribe recently defeated an identical lawsuit brought by a similar so-called "grass-roots" group, using the same shady tactics and the same riverboat casino law firm. In fact, a federal appeals court in Washington, D.C., categorically rejected its baseless claims — the same baseless claims that MichGo is using in its attempt to stop the Gun Lake casino.

Furthermore, MichGo and 23 is Enough supported Proposal 1 on the ballot a couple of years ago — a measure that specifically exempted tribal casinos from its provisions. In supporting Proposal 1, MichGo and 23 is Enough again accepted assistance from existing casinos seeking to stop competition.

It speaks to their lack of credibility in that they claim to be "morally opposed" to gambling but accept assistance derived from gambling dollars to further their own anti-competitive purposes.

Regarding Oakland County U.S. Rep. Mike Rogers, a big-time recipient of 23 is Enough's campaign contributions largesse: If reform and transparency are what he seeks, he should simply lead by example and disband his own untraceable 527 fund.

He does not deserve to be commended for his involvement in gaming issues but rather should be held accountable for the enormous job losses that have occurred in our state since he took elective office.

David K. Sprague is the tribal chairman of the Gun Lake Tribe of Pottawatomí Indians in Gun Lake.

It was an unpleasant surprise to read the Feb. 27 Oakland Press editorial against our proposed casino in West Michigan's Wayland Township.

Our surprise was not because The Press took a position against our sovereign rights but because the paper's editorial board declined to meet with us only three weeks earlier to discuss our project.

If fair and responsible journalism is something The Press editorial board values, it may have been enlightened upon learning that we don't ignore laws, we create them.

The tribe governs activities that are not criminally prohibited — like gambling — on land held in trust by the United States Government. That is one of the guiding principles of tribal sovereignty, something that the Founding Fathers recognized when they drafted the U.S. Constitution and something the U.S. Supreme Court has upheld in numerous decisions. That is not a "legal fiction," as stated in the editorial.

The Press editorial made several claims that are patently false. No state, let alone Florida, has ever refused an Indian casino when its own laws allow gambling. Florida has seven Indian casinos. The Press editorial also exposes an inadequate understanding of the law, through its flawed interpretation of the U.S. Supreme Court's Florida decision.

One wonders whether our opponents were able to secure an audience with the Press. If so, representatives of MichGo and 23 is Enough should not be trusted to provide an honest assessment of any gaming issue.

Here's why: MichGo sued for the sole purpose of delaying the Gun Lake cas-