

out you even knowing it.

Joey Williamson,
Wayland

Law enforcement finds no increase in crime from casinos

The Deputy Sheriff's Association of Michigan (DSAM) endorsed the Gun Lake Tribe's efforts to secure a tribal-state gaming compact with the State of Michigan. The decision to endorse followed a careful investigation into the impacts of Michigan tribal casinos through contact with Michigan Sheriffs with tribal gaming operations within their jurisdictions, on-site evaluations, attendance at public meetings sponsored by the opponents of the Gun Lake Casino, and crime statistics compiled by the Michigan State Police.

Our investigation concluded that there was no measurable increase in the rate of violent crimes, prostitution, or narcotics violations. We found that these operations are making significant contributions to law enforcement and public safety, and in turn helping to prevent criminal activities associated with increased visitors to these communities.

Casinos in host counties have created employment opportunities for both Native and non-Native Americans. There is a strong correlation between employment levels and crime rates.

Without exception, the sheriff's surveyed in our investigation reported excellent working relationships with very capable and trusted tribal police departments. Most tribal police officers and county officers have been cross-deputized by each respective department to provide seamless and professional law enforcement on and off the reservations. We further discovered that at times, tribal police officers take calls for the local law enforcement agency if the agency cannot readily respond; further demonstrating great cooperation and coordination of law enforcement efforts.

Our research warrants the

conclusion of Mr. Donald Holecek, Director of the Tourism Resource Center at Michigan State University, as reported in the Grand Rapids Business Journal on August 21, 2006. "There are several issues that are frequently brought up," Mr. Holecek told the Business Journal. "That casinos bring with them more bankruptcies, more crime, more family-related problems, and the list kind of goes on and on. But when people have really taken a look at this, it just doesn't exist."

It is important to note that all of the tribal facilities we examined operate under gaming compacts with the State of Michigan that require them to pay a percentage of revenue to local government. These payments generate a tremendous amount of direct funding for local law enforcement.

Revenue sharing payments like those of the tribal operations are unique to economic development projects. A comparison to corporate big box stores or large-scale amusement parks is appropriate. These projects are similar in size and attract a comparable amount of visitors. Private corporate funding for professional law enforcement services is rare and unheard of in areas surrounding a specific economic development project. Many traditional economic development projects have received or are receiving abatements or other economic incentives to encourage investment from both state and local governments. These incentives often reduce the amount of available revenue that could be specifically dedicated for law enforcement services needed for these projects as calls for service increase.

Local revenue sharing generated by tribal activities often provides a specific revenue stream to local communities that can be, and is used for sufficient law enforcement services in addition to the general fund revenues of the unit of government. These tribal payments are consistent and based on a flat percentage that is not discounted.

Gun Lake tribal leaders and Allegan County have signed agreements to guarantee funding for fire, law enforcement, and EMS. However, to maximize benefits to local government and law enforcement, a gaming compact should be signed by the State of Michigan.

Larry Orlowski,
Executive Director of the
Deputy Sheriff's Association
of Michigan

Mourning dove issue needs clarification

There is a lot of misinformation circulating about the Proposal 3 initiative on the November ballot. As a volunteer for "NO on Proposal Three," let me clearly state:

160,000 signatures were needed to get this issue on the ballot and every one of the minimum required number of signatures were gathered by volunteers throughout Michigan to save the mourning dove. I personally collected 2,394 signatures, and others just like me worked very, very hard to gather signatures, too.

This issue is not about any other hunting. It is just about the mourning dove. Mourning doves are not overpopulating our state. They are not destructive to people or crops (They eat weed seeds as their primary food source). They typically provide about an ounce of meat so there is little logic in killing these birds for food.

Since 1905, the mourning dove has been a protected songbird in Michigan and we want to protect that classification. In 1998 the Legislature of the State of Michigan designated the dove as our official bird of peace and this, too, needs our continued support.

Protecting the mourning dove is something we want to do because it's right. It's not a question of who else does it, it is a question what is right for the citizens of Michigan. Surveys have shown that a majority of us in Michigan want to protect the mourning dove.

In November, please vote "NO" to the hunting of