



Christian Civic League of Maine

Associated with Focus on the Family

Chairpersons Hickan and Supica, esteemed members at the Veterans and Legal Affairs committee, my name is Carroll Conley. I'm the executive director of the Christian Civic League, and I thank you for the opportunity to speak in opposition to the LD's before you that provide for expansion of gambling here in Maine.

What do Moveon.org, Our Revolution, and Progressive Democrats of America have in common with Christian Civic League? I think the best way to answer that question is a quote from Taylor Branch, the Pulitzer Prize, winning biographer of Martin Luther King, *State-sponsored, predatory gambling is essentially a corruption of democracy because it violates the most basic premises that make democracy unique: that you can be self-governing, you can be honest and open about your disagreements, as well as your agreements, and that you trust other people that you are in this together. That's what a compact of citizens is. And the first step away from it is to play each other for suckers. We're going to trick them into thinking they're going to get rich, but they are really going to be paying my taxes.*

The historic opposition of the Christian Civic League state-sponsored gambling is in line with the historic non-partisan opposition to this regressive tax, upon the poor. We don't oppose gambling expansion, because it's naughty: we oppose it because it's destructive. I have personally witnessed the devastation of spouses and children in Bangor serving on a pastoral staff when the casino came to our city. Immediately, I saw women and children's whose futures were wiped out because of a spouse's problem gambling.

I realize that there is always a consideration of collateral damage whenever we put up a factory or build a development or advance technology that could affect people's jobs. There are times, when such collateral damage, even when greatly mitigated, is unavoidable. I do not believe that is the case regarding the gambling expansion that is being promoted in our state now. Frankly, it's offensive to me, regarding the dismissiveness of the lives that are literally going to be ruined (innocent lives, that I might add that had nothing to do with the poor decisions of gamblers). As elected officials, representing citizens of Maine, I ask you, knowing that bankruptcy and suicide rates will indisputably increase in our state as gambling expands, for you personally, what is the acceptable rate of attrition or collateral damage of ruined lives, in the name of repairing bridges, building schools, and paving roads by playing our fellow citizens as suckers? I asked you to vote not to pass for LD's 1140, 1944, 1248, 1992, and 1275.