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January 23, 2006

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RESIDENTS FAVOR A SOUTHEASTERN MASSACHUSETTS CASINO

Survey finds 57% of SouthCoast residents want resort-style casino in region

As Massachusetts residents continue to spend more than \$1 billion annually at Rhode Island slot parlors and southeastern Connecticut casinos, a recent survey finds that a majority of South Coast residents support a resort casino in southeastern Massachusetts.

Approximately 57% of the respondents favor a resort-style casino in southeastern Massachusetts, while 27% are opposed and 16% are undecided, according to a survey released today by the Center for Policy Analysis at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth.

The random sample telephone survey, which has a 4.6% margin-of-error, interviewed 478 South Coast residents. The South Coast region, which has a population of over 345,000, includes the cities of Fall River and New Bedford, and the towns of Acushnet, Dartmouth, Fairhaven, Freetown, Lakeville, Marion, Mattapoisett, Rochester, Somerset, Swansea, Wareham and Westport. The main purpose of the survey was to determine whether SouthCoast residents support the authorization of a resort casino in Southeastern Massachusetts as proposed in various bills introduced into the state legislature by SouthCoast legislators for consideration during its 2006 formal session.

The strongest support for a casino is among respondents with a high school diploma or less (63.6%), although more than half of those with some college or an associate's degree (57.9%) and more than forty percent (40.4%) of those with a bachelor's degree or higher also favor a resort casino in Southeastern Massachusetts.

The poll also asked SouthCoast residents what types of gambling they had participated in during the last twelve months. More than half (53.0%) of SouthCoast residents have played a scratch ticket in the last year, while 47.5% have played other lottery games, such as Megamillions or Megabucks. The survey found that in the past year 30.8% of SouthCoast residents have played Keno, 25.0% have gambled at a casino, 6.6% have played bingo, 2.8% have wagered on a dog or horse race, 2.8% have bet on a sports event, and 1.3% have gambled over the Internet.

A significantly higher percentage of respondents with no diploma or a high school diploma (58.4%) played scratch tickets in the last year compared to respondents with some college or an associate's degree (47.4%) or a bachelor's degree or higher (49.0%). A higher percentage of males (56.0%) have played other lottery games in comparison to females (43.5%) (e.g. Megamillions, Megabucks), while residents who live in a town (39.2%) are more likely to play Keno than city residents (26.0%).

Dr. Clyde W. Barrow, director of the Center for Policy Analysis, said that "historically, southeastern Massachusetts residents have been avid gamblers, whether it is the Massachusetts state lottery, Rhode Island's slot parlors, or Connecticut's casinos." Barrow said he was not surprised by the survey's findings, since "SouthCoast residents have consistently expressed support for casino gaming as far back as 1993, when Fall River residents voted in favor of riverboat casinos by a margin of 62% to 38% in a non-binding referendum.

In 1995, several SouthCoast communities held non-binding referenda on a proposed Wampanoag Indian casino in New Bedford with New Bedford residents voting 77% to 23% in favor of a resort casino. Dartmouth residents voted in favor of the same proposal by a margin of 61% to 39%, along with residents of Rochester and Wareham, who voted in favor of the New Bedford proposal by 2 to 1 margins. Westport and Mattapoisett residents voted against the New Bedford proposal in 1995. Barrow stated the results of the Center for Policy Analysis poll suggest that "SouthCoast residents haven't changed their mind about this issue."

Barrow said that several bills before the state legislature would authorize one or more casinos in the Bay State, as well as slot machines at the state's four race tracks, but "Massachusetts residents have, in a sense, already voted on gaming expansion by aggressively patronizing Rhode Island's slot parlors and Connecticut's casinos."

According to the center's 2005 update, Massachusetts residents comprise 36% of Foxwoods' and 23% of Mohegan Sun's patron base and spent an estimated \$831 million at those facilities in 2004.

The patronage of Rhode Island's slot parlors by Massachusetts residents is even more pronounced with 74% of Newport Grand's and 35% of Lincoln Park's patron base coming from Massachusetts, where Bay Staters spend about \$181 million annually.

In March, the center will release its third annual New England Gaming Update (NEGU). The update is a comprehensive analysis detailing the patron origin and monies spent by residents of each New England state at Rhode Island's slot parlors and Connecticut's casinos. This year's report will include data on Maine's newly opened Bangor slot parlor.

Poll results are available at: www.umassd.edu/cfpa/docs/gambling_behavior.pdf