

The four Catholic Bishops of Massachusetts issued the following statement today on Expanded Gambling and Question 3 on the November ballot. For further details or questions please visit www.macatholic.org/ or contact James F. Driscoll, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Catholic Conference, at 617-746-5620 or jdriscoll@macatholic.org.

A Statement of the Roman Catholic Bishops of Massachusetts on Expanded Gambling and Question 3

The issue of expanded gambling within the Commonwealth has once again come to the forefront of the public arena. We, the bishops of the four Catholic dioceses in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts again feel compelled to oppose the expansion of gambling in Massachusetts and urge citizens to vote “Yes” on Ballot Question 3 on November 4th. A “Yes” vote would ban casinos and slot parlors in the state.

It was a difficult time for many families in the Commonwealth when the law authorizing expanded gambling was passed in 2011. At the time, unemployment was high at 7.4%. Thousands of families relied on state assistance to survive, and more and more were facing the harsh realities of poverty. Naturally, the state was searching for new ways to increase revenues and create jobs. While many still struggle, the state of the economy in the Commonwealth is clearly more robust, with unemployment at 5.5%; below the national average of 6.1%.

Massachusetts has outpaced the rest of the country in the breadth and speed of its economic recovery from the recession that fueled the debate for expanded gambling. As the Commonwealth has recovered, other Northeast states where gambling is legal have seen troubling trends in a decline in revenue in their local gambling venues. Casinos in New Jersey and Connecticut are struggling and closing. In fact, it appears likely that five of the twelve casinos in Atlantic City, New Jersey alone will be closed by the end of 2014.

Many individuals in those states who heard the same promises of gainful employment in the gaming industry are now losing their jobs. Furthermore, reliance on gambling revenue in neighboring New England states such as New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Maine will only increase the pressure and decrease the economic success of the gambling industry in the Commonwealth.

While the Catholic Church views gambling as a legitimate form of entertainment when done in moderation, expanded gaming in the Commonwealth opens the door to a new form of predatory gaming. We are concerned that the Commonwealth will be forced to rely on an unstable form of revenue, depending largely on those addicted to gambling. They are the citizens who are already among the ranks of the poorest in the community – the ones who can least afford to gamble.

The gambling industry threatens local businesses, weakens the moral fabric of society, and fundamentally alters communities for decades to come. Three destination resort casinos and a “slots” parlor will saturate the entire state, diminishing our rich heritage and history. There is too much at stake for Massachusetts to open the door wide to expanded gaming – Massachusetts can do better. Massachusetts can say “no” by voting “yes!”

We urge the citizens of Massachusetts to vote “Yes” on Ballot Question 3 and stop the expansion of predatory gambling.

His Eminence Seán P. Cardinal O’Malley, OFM, Cap.
Archbishop of Boston

Most Reverend Mitchell T. Rozanski
Bishop of Springfield

Most Reverend Robert J. McManus
Bishop of Worcester

Most Reverend George W. Coleman
Apostolic Admin.of Fall River