

Written by Administrator  
Tuesday, 22 April 2014 22:00 -

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Casino gambling was supposed to create thousands of jobs. Now it could be a job killer — and not for the reasons opponents prattle on about.

After decades of debate, Massachusetts finally legalized gaming less than three years ago. But in some circles, the debate never ended. Just as we are about to hand out the first set of resort licenses, a group is trying to get a question to repeal the casino law on the November ballot. This after prospective casino operators dropped millions of dollars on their applications expecting that roulette wheels would one day spin.

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Now it's up to the state Supreme Judicial Court to decide whether the [Repeal the Casino Deal](#) campaign can move forward. In a brief filed with the court, business advocacy group Massachusetts Competitive Partnership tells justices to just say no to the ballot initiative, arguing “the potential economic harm of the Petition would extend far beyond the businesses that have directly invested in legalized gaming and could potentially damage the reputation of the Commonwealth for years to come.”

Put another way, businesses hate working in a climate of uncertainty, and giving voters the chance to undo the casino law would make the state the laughingstock of economic development officials nationwide.

No matter how you feel about the societal impact of gaming or its merits as an economic engine, the group -- headed by former state economic development secretary Dan O'Connell and cofounded by Suffolk Construction chief John Fish -- makes an important point.

The perception that Massachusetts is bad for business has been our reality; after all these years, we still can't shake the “Taxachusetts” label. As the partnership points out in its filing, Massachusetts ranked 47th last year in an [annual survey](#) conducted by Chief Executive magazine of the best and worst states for business. CEOs said the “regulatory and tax environment has become untenable” and “the Legislature and government has an activist mentality.”

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And those were the diplomatic answers.

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One particularly unhappy CEO provided this response: “If I were designing Hell for a company, I couldn’t do as good a job as Massachusetts has. We will be leaving the state within the next year.” Keep this in mind, too -- the survey was conducted

*before*

all the shenanigans over where casinos should be built. Besides the repeal effort, we have the new mayor of Boston, Marty Walsh, trying to hijack the state gaming commission process so he can extract more money and concessions from casino companies. Then there is the matter of the many communities that have rejected casinos in their backyards. All this is important because at any given moment some other state is trying to convince a Massachusetts company to relocate or expand on their turf. Last month, the state of Kentucky was holding court with two dozen local business executives at the Smith & Wollensky restaurant in the Back Bay. Steak was on the menu. So was the idea of the Bluegrass State as a low-cost place to do business. “There is more to Kentucky than fabulous horses,” said Hal B. Goode, president of the [Kentucky Association for Economic Development](#), a nonprofit that works with the state to help recruit companies. “We have a great climate for business.”

Are things that bad that our businesses would consider a move to Kentucky?

We’re not quite there yet. We still have a lot going for us: a highly educated workforce, Harvard and MIT, a tech boom, and being the center of the universe for biotech and healthcare. We’re even rebuilding our manufacturing base.

In terms of corporate taxes, we’re No. 25 on the Tax Foundation’s [annual index](#), not that much different from Kentucky at 27. The Taxachusetts moniker sticks because, let’s face it, it’s hard to come up with a catchy slogan when you have to work with “hey, we’re in the middle of the pack.”

Undoing the gaming law would take care of that quickly -- back of the line, anyone?

Last fall, Attorney General Martha Coakley ruled the ballot petition was unconstitutional because it breaks the implied contract between the gaming commission and the casino

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operators. Gambling opponents disagreed and appealed to the SJC, which will hear arguments in early May.

We've worked hard to make our state business-friendly, but the casino process has shown the only thing predictable about Massachusetts is how unpredictable we can be. That's not something to brag about.

**Read more** [http://news.google.com/news/url?sa=t&fd=R&ct2=us&usg=AFQjCNFvZB6r8pDyu\\_YJbkjHwoRDGVkSOg&clid=c3a7d30bb8a4878e06b80cf16b898331&ei=Y-ZWU8CiM8OFggfkOw&url=http://www.bostonglobe.com/business/2014/04/22/sjc-allows-casino-repeal-ballot-gaming-law-may-from-job-creator-job-killer/8Mk902h6b3aDylsXhHAqFN/story.html](http://news.google.com/news/url?sa=t&fd=R&ct2=us&usg=AFQjCNFvZB6r8pDyu_YJbkjHwoRDGVkSOg&clid=c3a7d30bb8a4878e06b80cf16b898331&ei=Y-ZWU8CiM8OFggfkOw&url=http://www.bostonglobe.com/business/2014/04/22/sjc-allows-casino-repeal-ballot-gaming-law-may-from-job-creator-job-killer/8Mk902h6b3aDylsXhHAqFN/story.html)