

Critics say another Phila. casino could harm existing ones

Written by Administrator

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Chris Palmer, *Inquirer Staff Writer*

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Concerned legislators from Bucks, Delaware and Montgomery Counties said Friday that a second Philadelphia casino could drain customers, revenues, and maybe jobs from existing gaming sites in the region.

"Too much of a good thing is a bad idea," said State Rep. Thaddeus Kirkland, a Democrat whose district includes Harrah's Philadelphia in Chester.

"I certainly would feel better if there weren't another one," said Joseph DiGirolamo, the Republican mayor of Bensalem, home of Parx Casino.

State Sen. Daylin Leach (D., Montgomery), whose district includes Valley Forge Casino Resort, said, "I'm not sure how many licenses in this area is enough and how many is too many. It's something we should all be concerned about."

Leach, like many of his legislative counterparts, was quick to point out that he did not have statistics or studies to prove any effects of an additional casino on the regional market.

Still, he and others said they believe the gambling market is saturated.

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Dominic Pileggi, the Delaware County Republican who is state Senate majority leader, said he believes that new casinos "are competing for the same dollars."

Placing a new casino near either Delaware County or Bucks County, he said, would draw gamblers from an existing facility.

"Most of the Philadelphia-area facilities are drawing from the same pool of potential gamblers," he said. "And one of the factors in where the gamblers decide to gamble is how far the facility is from their home."

Pileggi said he did not know where the second Philadelphia casino would be, and would not comment on rumors that the license would go to a site in South Philadelphia, a quick ride up I-95 from Harrah's.

Kirkland, however, said that was what he had been hearing, and he was troubled by the news.

"If we continue to increase the number of casinos in Pennsylvania, you decrease the amount of revenue in certain areas," he said, which could also lead to casino layoffs.

And he didn't hesitate to describe what he envisioned as a worst-case scenario for his home district.

"We become like Atlantic City," he said. "That's my biggest fear."

Four casinos have closed in Atlantic City so far this year.

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cpalmer@phillynews.com 609-217-8305 @cs_palmer

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