

Frank Wolf
Member U.S. Congress, VA-IO, 1981-2015, retired
Vienna, VA

October 1, 2024
Via Email

Dear Chairman and Members of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors,

I am writing to urge you to tell Senator Dave Marsden that you are opposed to his proposed legislation to allow a casino in Fairfax County and to ask him to withdraw it from consideration when the Virginia General Assembly reconvenes in January 2025. I would also recommend that you share Senator Marsden's casino plans and your opposition to those plans with your constituents. We need as many voices as possible speaking up against a casino in Reston, Tysons, or elsewhere in Fairfax County.

I'm familiar with the various arguments that those concerned with potential process ramifications have made, as well as the arguments in favor and in opposition to a casino.

While concerns have been expressed that public opposition by you to casino legislation would damage Fairfax County's ability to achieve its legislative goals or result in further State restrictions being placed on the County's legislative authorities, I sincerely doubt that either would happen, particularly if we stand united regionally. I expect that down-state legislators would know of the power of our local delegation and would not want to set precedents that could come back to bite them.

While casino proponents continue to argue that a casino would increase Fairfax County's tax revenues and thereby decrease the need to raise property taxes or reduce services to balance the County budget in future years, the argument is dead wrong. Casinos do not grow local economies and are not the answer to balancing local budgets. In fact, casinos do considerable damage to local businesses.

The tax revenue data reported by state tax and gaming authorities in states that have hosted casinos for years is clear: In the first few years, tax revenues increase in both real and inflation-adjusted terms. But over time, the inflation-adjusted tax revenues are flat or trend downward. This is true, for example, in nearby Pennsylvania, which has had state-authorized casino gambling since late 2006.

This would be true in Virginia and in Fairfax County as well. Plus, for every \$1 in casino tax revenue, the social costs in crime and added welfare payments associated with casinos are estimated by scholars to be between \$3-12 dollars.

My biggest personal concern, however, with having a casino in Fairfax County is what it might do to the fabric of Fairfax County, the Town of Vienna, and surrounding communities. A casino would upend the lives of so many families. We should not ignore the recent, compelling testimony before the Joint Subcommittee to Study the Feasibility of Establishing the Virginia Gaming Commission in Richmond that summarized how gambling affects the fabric of our society:

' As Brianne Doura-Schawohl, the former vice president of U.S. Policy and Strategic Development for global harm prevention consultancy EPIC Risk

Management and now head of Doura-Schawohl Consulting LLC, told the assembled group:

- o Problem gambling is not just a personal problem, it's a family, community and state problem. One individual that struggles with gambling-related harm negatively impacts eight to 10 other individuals.
- o About 5% of people who actively gamble will suffer from problematic gambling at some point.
- o Or, as Dr. Carolyn Hawley, the president of the Virginia Problem Gambling Council and an associate professor in mental health counseling at Virginia Commonwealth University's School of Allied Health Professions, stated:
 - o We are seeing a huge demographic shift where people right at the beginning of their careers are now being devastated by developing a gambling disorder.
 - o The impact that problem gambling has on people, on their families, on their work, and on their schools is significant.
 - o When you get people this early in their lives that are experiencing this condition, it's such a setback.

If you are skeptical of these scholars' findings, there is an older in-depth study on the impact of casinos in communities, published in 2013, from the Council on Casinos that makes the same points and goes even further in its analysis. The Council, an independent, nonpartisan group of scholars and leaders, examined the role of casinos in American life. The study was funded by the Bodman Foundation, the John Templeton Foundation and other contributors to the Institute for American Values (IAV). While the IAV is no longer operational, the Council Report was archived by the Stop Predatory Gambling Foundation and can be found on its website. The bottom-line conclusion of the report states: "Evidence from the health and social sciences suggests that the new American casinos are associated with a range of negative health, economic, political, intellectual, and social outcomes. For this reason, we view state sponsorship of casino gambling as a regressive and damaging policy."

I also would point you to the American Gaming Association's 2022 report on human trafficking in the gaming industry which states in part, "Hospitality venues like casinos are used by traffickers to set up and conduct meetings or seek out potential buyers. Most of the victims are women and young girls; however, men and young boys also find themselves in these coercive scenarios and should not be overlooked."

Finally, I would note that the American Psychiatric Association's DSM-5, which is used by healthcare providers and insurers as the principal source for mental health diagnoses, recognizes gambling as an addiction on the same level as heroin, cocaine and opioids.

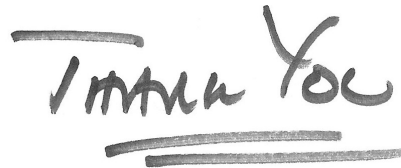
I know of 24 local community organizations throughout the County and the Town of Vienna (listed below) as well as numerous individuals that have expressed firm opposition to a casino in Fairfax County. Fairfax County is a good place to live and raise our families and all of us want to keep it that way. As a community, we hope that you will speak out in the face of all this clear, nonpartisan economic, social and medical evidence.

I hope that you agree that a gambling casino in Tysons, Reston or elsewhere in Fairfax County would bring many unwanted problems to Northern Virginia. Along with thousands of Fairfax County residents, I firmly believe that a casino has no place here and I urge you all to speak out against it.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Frank Wolf



cc: Governor Glen Youngkin
Lt. Governor Winsome Sears
Attorney General Jason Miyares
Members, Virginia State Senate and House of Delegates

Community Organizations That Have Expressed Opposition

Clarks Crossing Homes Association Deep
Glen Estates Homeowners Association
Fairfax Federation of Citizens Associations
Franklin Area Citizens Association
Great Falls Citizens Association Greater
Tysons Citizens Coalition
Lemon Road Civic Association
Lafayette Village Community Association
Manors at Wolf Trap Homeowners Association
Mason District Council
McLean Citizens Association
McLean Hunt Estates Civic Association
McLean Hunt Homeowners Association
Northern Virginia Citizens Association
One Park*Crest Condominium Unit Owners Association
Pimmit Hills Civic Association survey results
Reston Citizens Association
The Rotonda
Shouse Village Community Association
Sully District Council of Civic Associations
The Townhomes at Westwood Village Olyvners Association
Town of Vienna (Council)
Western Fairfax County Citizens Association
Wolf Trap Green Homeowners Association