

Dear Father Gene et al.:

The hearing yesterday of the House Finance Committee at the Old Colony House in Newport was a great success, reflecting the dedication of the Citizens Concerned About Casino Gambling (CCACG) and its associates from all over R.I.

The results are in and together we did it ! Read the reports in the Providence Journal this morning and the Newport Daily News this afternoon to see how well we did. First of all we filled the hearing room and had people waiting on the steps outside for admission, which was one of the goals we set for ourselves- the quick work in getting the postcards out with the date and time, the paid notices in the Newport Daily News, Newport this Week and the ProJo (northern RI section) and reminder tel. calls as well as the Editorial in the Newport Daily News on Tuesday all paid off- the hearing room was filled and the overflow was waiting on the steps outside.

According to the press, the 6 proponents of Rep. San Bento's proposed bill to REQUIRE that the slot parlors operate 24/7 (Bill # 7040) were overwhelmed by the approximate 30 speakers who supported Reps. Jackson, Rice, McManus and Coaty (Bill #7161) that calls for a binding referendum by state-wide and Newport and Lincoln voters to decide if 24/7 operations are approved or not.

The largest surprise to me, however, was the reception and behavior of the members of the House Finance Committee at this hearing in Newport. Over these last 31 years, I have traveled to the RI Lottery Commission and/or to hearings of the House Finance Committee at the State House with others to speak against the expansion of gambling. Almost without fail we were treated rudely by the officials in charge. I remember once that Father Gene and I were asked to leave the small glass enclosed room to make room for some of the proponents at the Lottery Commission, which we refused to do. I remember going with bus-loads of folks from the Aquidneck Island area to hearings of the House Finance Committee and finding ourselves treated just as rudely, interrupted by members of the Committee, watching the committee members chat during our presentations or read a newspaper while our side was speaking. This hearing at the Old Colony House in Newport was completely different. The Committee members were courteous, asked questions and made comments as necessary but the attitude that has been so irksome over the years had disappeared. For that I thank the members and the Chairman for their consideration. The speakers on our side did an outstanding job in presenting our case for which I offer them my congratulations. I also congratulate everyone involved in this effort in any way. The results are in ! We did it.

Don Booth
Member CCACG Executive Committee