



**Statement of Florida Catholic Conference in Opposition to Expansion of Casino Gambling
November 1, 2011**

The Bishops of the Florida Catholic Conference are opposed to current efforts to expand casino gambling in Florida. Their concern about expansion of gambling in our state is not new.

As early as 1978, the bishops expressed opposition to the proposals which sought to legalize casino gambling in our state. They spoke then, as I do on their behalf today, out of a sense of responsibility as religious leaders, and also out of their concern as Floridians over the long-range implications which casino gambling would have for the quality of life of all of the residents of our State.

In 1986, the bishops again expressed their opposition to proposals to legalize casino gambling in our state. Citing the experience of casino gambling in other parts of the United States, they alluded to concerns that casino gambling seems to be invariably accompanied by syndicated crime. They cited prostitution and loan-sharking as two of the many aspects of organized crime. Not the least consequence, they noted, was the possibility of improper influence on public officials.

Again in 1994, the bishops expressed opposition to efforts to expand gambling in Florida, noting that a new multi-million dollar industry brings with it high stakes games and a continual drive for more and more gambling revenues. There is historical and anecdotal evidence that casino gambling is accompanied by vice and social evils. They also observed the impact of casino gambling on low and moderate income families and individuals, and those for whom gambling becomes a compulsive behavior, as well as on neighborhoods, housing patterns, the homeless, and on public morality in general.

And in 2004, the bishops once again expressed opposition to expansion of gambling. Many churches, schools, and other non-profit organizations rely upon games-of-chance for relatively small amounts of revenue. Most will recognize the difference between local fund-raisers managed by volunteers and a multi-billion dollar industry that exploits vulnerable members of the community for financial gain.

Our opposition today is especially based on our belief that expansion of casino gambling will victimize the poor and encourage addictive gambling. We are concerned that as gambling revenue increases, reliance upon an unstable form of revenue would depend upon those who are addicted to gambling, many of whom are already among the ranks of the poorest in the community. Needy individuals are particularly vulnerable to the lure of the casino and the promise of great fortune. For those who are struggling to make ends meet, casino gambling can provide an attractive means to relieve financial burdens, which ultimately only leads to crushing debt and personal crisis. We oppose the current proposals in view of the potential harm to the common good of the residents of our state.

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Note: The Church teaches that gambling though a luxury is not considered wrong in itself but it can become wrong when it interferes with one's other duties or responsibilities.