

Casino CIA Campaign

OP –ED/ COMMENTARY

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I LOVE TO GAMBLE IN PENNSYLVANIA’S CASINOS - BUT NOT WITH MY HEALTH

People lose money in casinos all over the world, but we patrons of Pennsylvania casinos also lose a little bit of our lung function every time we spend an hour or so at the tables, or playing the slots.

I quit smoking 10 years ago because I was tired of trying to catch my breath all the time. I hated coughing. I couldn’t stand how I smelled. It was expensive.

So, after 30 years of smoking, I gave it up and patted myself on the back for getting out from under that gray cloud.

Once I quit, though, I realized how much secondhand smoke I was breathing when I went out to restaurants. I hadn’t noticed it in the past, but now it really made me gasp for air and feel sick. So I quit going out so much.

That’s why I was so grateful when lawmakers passed the smoking ban last year. Suddenly I could go out for a beer again! I was free to go back to my bowling league! Even the bingo hall was, once again, a part of my world!

Unfortunately, they exempted one of my favorite haunts, the casinos.

I admit it. I’m an old guy who loves to kill a couple of hours sitting at the blackjack table shuffling chips and checking out the bluehairs working the slot machines.

I quit going to the tables when I quit smoking, because I became so sensitive to the secondhand smoke. I thought the smoking ban would let me go back to throwing my money at the casinos again, but that didn’t happen.

It doesn’t make sense to me that the lawmakers would want to ban smoking everywhere else, but not at the casinos. If the ban is supposed to be protecting people’s health, wouldn’t they want to protect everybody’s health? Is it not worth protecting the health of people in casinos? This is like banning firearms in all public places.... except casinos.

I can see how, if I were still smoking, I’d be peeved about having to go outside to smoke instead of lighting up at the bar or chatting with my family between courses. But, smokers and nonsmokers alike, know secondhand smoke isn’t doing us any good.

I don't think Pennsylvania lawmakers really have a lower opinion of casino patrons and employers than they have of other Pennsylvanians. I'm sure they were under a lot of pressure. But the senators and representatives did the right thing in passing the smoking ban. Now I hope they'll do the right thing and expand the ban to cover casinos too.

That way, money will be the only thing we'll lose in the casinos.

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