



Virginia Faith & Freedom Coalition, Inc.

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Members of the Virginia General Assembly

Dear Members of the Virginia General Assembly,

On behalf of the signed pastors, faith leaders, and supporters of the Virginia Faith & Freedom Coalition, we are writing to urge you to consider the horrific moral consequences of the proposed casino project in Tysons. This casino will have severe negative impacts on our local communities, especially considering its proximity to schools, houses, and the burdens it would place on families in Northern Virginia.

While we are deeply concerned about the specific proposal in Tysons, we also wish to express our broader opposition to the expansion of casino operations across Virginia, particularly in Northern Virginia.

As Christians we understand that casinos directly appeal to covetousness and greed. And for those that may not adhere to our same beliefs, we encourage you to read the numerous studies that show the long-term costs of promoting gambling far outweigh any short-term economic benefits. The promise of jobs and revenue from casinos is fleeting, but the social costs—ranging from family breakdowns to financial ruin, public health issues and drunk driving—are long-lasting. Virginia's communities deserve better than to be further commodified by the predatory gambling industry.

The Council of Casinos, a group founded to educate the public on the negative effects of Casino gambling, put out a report in 2013 that found:

1. Casinos target the poor.
2. Casinos prey upon patrons enslaved by the unjust compulsion of addiction.
3. Slot machines are rigged against gamblers.
4. State governments and private casinos conspire against communities.

The study looked at 300 Metropolitan Statistical Areas and found that the presence of a casino reduces voluntarism, civic participation, family stability, and other forms of social capital within 15 miles of a community where it is located. Another study of members of Gamblers Anonymous found that upwards of 26 percent have gambling-related divorces or separations.

The American Psychiatric Association classifies problem gambling as a “substance related and Addictive Disorder” which re-wires the prefrontal cortex of the brain. While problem gambling is treatable through medication and other forms of mental health treatments, almost 90% of problem gamblers never seek help. In Virginia the problem gambling hotline has increased almost 150% in the past few years. Localities with casinos have reportedly spiked 788% according to Axios Richmond.

Casinos are well documented places of human trafficking. Traffickers often seek to set up shop in casino hotels to facilitate prostitution. Normal casino hotel activity, with hundreds of people arriving and leaving the facility on a 24/7 basis and making trips to and from the hotel provides the perfect environment and client base for the sex trafficking. Given the well-documented and ongoing human trafficking problem in Tysons, state and local officials should focus their energy on tackling that problem before ever considering a casino that will exacerbate the problem.

We ask that you consider the moral, social, and economic impact of this proposal and reject the idea of allowing a casino to be built in Tysons. We urge you to uphold the values that make our communities strong—values of integrity, family, and responsibility—and to resist the temptation to prioritize short-term profits over the long-term health of our state. Thank you for your time and consideration. We trust you will make the right decision for the people of Virginia, especially the families in Northern Virginia who will bear the brunt of this Project.

Sincerely,

Pastor Will Archer
Lead Pastor
Potomac Valley Church

Caleb Max
Board Member
VAFFC

John Rubino
Nativity Catholic Church
Burke, Virginia

Tim Parrish
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Pastor Lawrence Hubb
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Minister Ronald Tibbs
Calling the Church
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Calling the Church
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Chaplin Raymond Perez
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Praise Center Church of God in Christ

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