

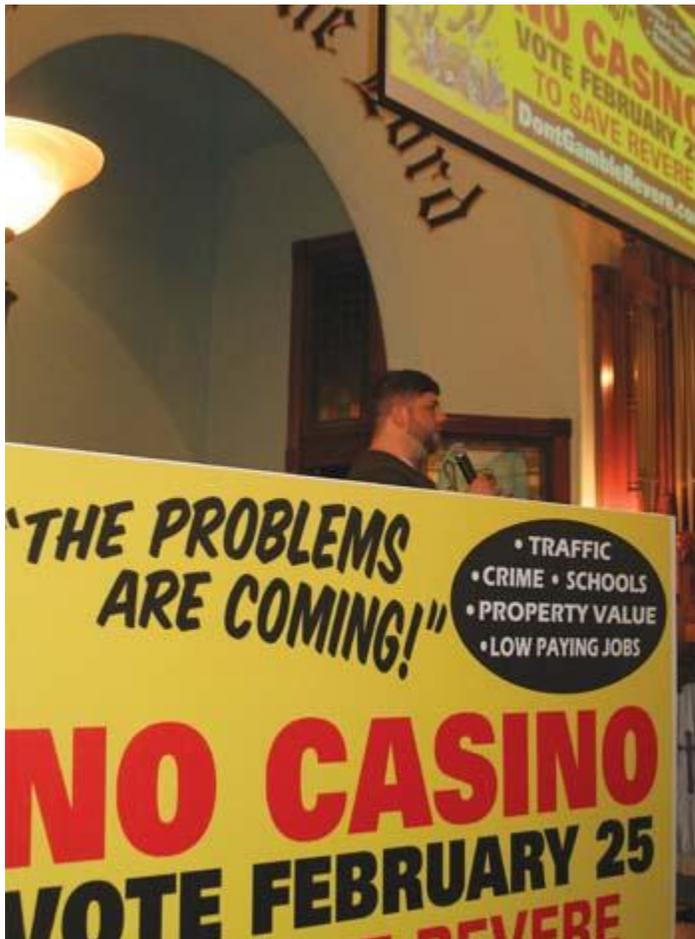
[Revere Journal – Revere Massachusetts Newspaper](#)

Your Hometown Newspaper Since 1881

Casino Opponents Focus on Problems at Last Week's Rally

February 19, 2014

By [Seth Daniel](#)



Joe Catricala, coordinator of Don't Gamble on Revere, is flanked with yellow 'No Casino' signs last week.

With larger than life yellow 'No Casino' signs posted last week at f the First Congregational Church – signs that showed Paul Revere yelling “The Problems Are Coming” – anti-casino advocates decried the problems they see on the horizon if a casino is allowed in the upcoming Feb. 25 referendum vote.

With Revere's Joe Catricala of Don't Gamble on Revere leading the rally last Tuesday night, Feb. 11, about 50 curious visitors stopped in to hear messages from local and national anti-casino advocates. Included on the agenda was a former Congressman from Connecticut, a national anti-casino advocate from Lawrence and a concerned Revere mother – as well as members of the local clergy.

“We want you all here tonight to hear the other side of the casino story, the side that hasn't been told so much,” said Catricala at the outset of the forum.

That's exactly what members of Don't Gamble on Revere and several Revere clergy members have been trying to do over the last month .

Whether at small rallies, the larger interfaith community gathering last Sunday afternoon at Immaculate Conception Church following services, doing active phone banking or hosting weekly information sessions – the anti-casino side has shown up for this campaign.

It's a side to the casino discussion that was seen in East Boston last year, but something that never really emerged in Revere. “We did not organize in November,” said Rev. Nick Granitsas of First Congregational. “We feel we failed Revere then. We came to a conclusion we needed to organize this time around. We are ashamed we did not fight harder in November, but this time it has created the most unbelievable unity amongst us. We are trying to do what we should have done before. It's with humility we come before the community to organize as one.”

Catricala said having a second chance allowed his organization to stand up for what they believed was right.

“If you see one of your friends kicked and don't do anything about it, but later feel guilty about not doing anything, you would say to yourself that if it ever happened again, you would do something,” he said. “We have our chance again and that's why we've stood up now.”

Robert Steele, a former Connecticut Congressman (1970-1975) who lives in the area where Mohegan Sun and Foxwoods are, said casinos kill communities. He said he knew so many people who were excited for the casinos to come into Connecticut, but are now sorry they ever advocated for it.

“Let there be no mistake about it, the only people who benefit from a casino are the owners of a casino,” he said, pounding his fist on the lectern. “The idea is simple; stick a straw into your community and suck as much money as you can out of it.”

Another speaker, Les Bernal, the national director of Stop Predatory Gambling (and a Lawrence resident), said he has watched the same negative story play out all over the country as it has in Revere – a casino company offering big promises, a municipality in need of money, and neighboring cities pitted against one another. He said his organization is particularly interested in stopping government-sponsored gambling – such as exists in Massachusetts.

“What’s happening in Revere is happening all over the country,” he said. “Good cities like Revere all across the country are being tricked by this very powerful lobby...One out of 10 of your neighbors will be expendable...This is a government program that ruins people’s lives and makes them useless to society.”

Also invited to the forum were organizers and volunteers Celeste Myers and John Ribeiro, who founded and still run No Eastie Casino.

Many in the audience were curious about the ballot question calling for a repeal of the gaming laws – a question that could appear on the statewide ballot in November.

Ribeiro said there are no guarantees, but he believes casinos will be repealed in the state. “With that question, no matter what stage the casino is at, the casino would close down,” he said. “It’s not a matter of if casino gambling is repealed in Massachusetts, it’s a matter of when. Eventually, you will all come to our side and casino gambling will be repealed...Once the vote is done, it never comes back before you. There are no ways to close the doors of a casino. A casino is forever.”