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OPPOSITION TO PROPOSED SENECA COUNTY CASINO

Leader of gambling opposition group: Proposed Seneca County casino 'will change this region forever'

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Residents who oppose a [Rochester-area developer's push to build a \\$350 million casino gaming resort in Seneca County](#) are getting support from a national anti-gambling organization.

Les Bernal, national director of the Stop Predatory Gaming Foundation, recently visited the area and met with residents in the town of Tyre, where the casino would be built if Wilmorite, a real estate development firm based in the Rochester area, is granted a license by the state casino siting board.

In an interview with The Citizen, Bernal said states that have embraced casino gaming tend to be "the biggest financial basket cases in the country."

"This is a failed idea," he said.

Last fall, New York voters approved a constitutional amendment to allow the construction of non-Indian casinos. Shortly after the amendment's approval, Wilmorite unveiled plans to build a gaming resort in Tyre, near Thruway exit 41.

Wilmorite's [proposal includes a casino, 200-room hotel, spa and dining and entertainment venues](#). The project would create 1,800 permanent jobs and 1,200 constructions, according to Wilmorite. The company estimates the gaming resort would draw more than 9,000 daily visitors and 3.3 million visitors annually.

While local government officials have endorsed the proposal, some residents are opposed to it. A group of town residents have launched a group, Casino Free Tyre, to oppose the Wilmorite's proposal.

Bernal believes Casino Free Tyre is on the right side of this issue.

"Casinos are only legal if government is a partner to it. This is really a government program that is based on extracting wealth from this region," he said. "I think the citizens around this area are wise to stand up and fight it. When citizens stand up and exercise their power, they will ultimately prevail on this."

If the construction of the gaming resort is allowed to proceed, Bernal said it would have a major impact, not only on those who visit the casino, but also on residents who live in the area.

"Even if you don't gamble, you end up paying for this inequality and unfairness. You end up paying for it in higher taxes. You end up paying for it in terms of the kind of community you live," he said. "This isn't a business that brings people together in a positive way."

The proposed casino resort isn't a done deal, though. It is competing with two other proposals in the Southern Tier for the region's license. The state will review the proposals and announce the winner of the license in early fall.