

**Testimony before the Assembly Judiciary Committee  
On ACR-1 10:00 a.m.  
Committee Room 12, 4th Floor,  
State House Annex, Trenton, NJ  
Chair: Assemblyman John McKeon**

**March 7, 2016**

By

Marlene Z. Asselta, President

Good Afternoon, Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, my name is Marlene Asselta, I am President of the Southern New Jersey Development Council (%SNJDC%). By way of background, the SNJDC was founded in 1951 in Atlantic City. Its mission is to attract new business and investment, to retain existing industry throughout the region and to influence government laws and regulations affecting economic development in the southern 8 counties of NJ.

I am here today in opposition of the proposed constitutional amendment (ACR-1) which would allow the Legislature to pass laws to permit casinos in North Jersey. I refer specifically to the plan to establish two new casinos in the north. The argument that expanding gaming to North Jersey is the best way to revitalize an important industry to the state's economy and therefore revive Atlantic City fails to address the impact on the surrounding region, including the counties of Ocean, Cape May, Cumberland and western

Atlantic. This region has already been negatively impacted by a loss of 4 casinos and over 8,000 jobs and with expansion of gaming into North Jersey could lose even more.

We find it interesting that now when casino executives, gaming professionals, government leaders and the business community are looking at diversifying the Atlantic City economy and succeeding with initiatives and proposals to return Atlantic City to its roots of non-gaming activities, some in state government seek to place a constitutional amendment on the 2016 ballot to *expand* gaming.

We are seeing private investment in Atlantic City, including non-gaming tourism entertainment opportunities, higher education expansion and large industry choosing to locate their headquarters on the island. All are ingredients of a recipe to revitalize Atlantic City.

Our concerns can be summed up in 3 points: 1) Is this the best time to abandon the restriction of gaming only in Atlantic City, which is the premise that led to the passage of the 1976 constitutional amendment permitting gaming; 2) the theory that funding from the new casino properties would be filtered back into Atlantic City is convoluted and raises more questions than it answers, and 3) there is a certain likelihood that the two new casinos will quickly face the same competitive issues that Atlantic City faces when gaming industry executives look to Manhattan for its next venue.

With respect, this initiative is not good for Atlantic City and the southern New Jersey region and we ask that you reconsider your position to place this amendment on the 2016 ballot.