

TO: GRAY DAVIS, Governor  
BILL LOCKYER, Attorney General  
JOHN BURTON, Senate President Pro-Tem  
ROBERT HERTZBERG, Speaker of Assembly  
DON PERALTA, Chair, Government Organization Committee

FROM: ~~INDEPENDENT INDIANS FOR INDIAN SELF-RELIANCE~~

RE: AB 1416 (Wesson)

DATE: April 25, 2000

We are a newly formed group of Native Americans, who will be forming a PAC next month. We are not directly associated with any tribe, reservation, or casino.

We strongly urge you to reject AB 1416. This bill attempts to thwart the will of the people of California. Both Proposition 5 and Constitutional Amendment 1A intended for gambling expansion only on Indian Reservations. However, AB 1416 provides for gambling expansion at all card clubs. It further extends the existing moratorium on new card clubs for many more years, thus creating a virtual monopoly for the existing card clubs.

It is no surprise that existing card clubs contribute heavily to the legislators that they expect will help achieve a desired result.

According to his campaign filings, Assemblyman Herb Wesson has received more than \$135,000 from the gambling interests, with \$35,000 in just the last 90 days. Commerce Casino, alone, has contributed \$40,000 to Mr. Wesson. Mr. Wesson is certainly a "water carrier" for the card clubs, hence his sponsorship of AB 1416.

Assemblyman Wesson is not alone in his assistance to the card club industry. Dick Floyd and Ed Vincent have long been helping the card clubs, and have received heavy contributions. A new recruit is now Marco Firebaugh, whose District includes both Commerce Club and Bicycle Club, the two largest card clubs. According to his campaign filings, Firebaugh has already received more than \$60,000 from gambling interests, including \$23,000 directly from Commerce Casino and another \$5,000 from Bicycle Club. In addition, other contributions have come privately from owners and executives of the card clubs, and Commerce Club has hosted fundraisers for Firebaugh, and others, at the card club.

Do these card clubs now deserve favorable action from the state just because they can contribute money to legislators? We, the Indians, also contribute to campaigns - but with a major difference. Our tribal casinos obey both the law and high ethical standards. We create new industries, schooling for our children, and general "self-reliance". Our ancestors would be proud of us. Our casinos have not been fined for

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violations of the law, nor have promoters been sent to jail for unlawful activity, nor has the federal government ever had to seize one of our casinos for illegal drug money laundering. The card clubs, as you know, have had all of these problems. The card clubs are simply selfish profiteers, with a much lower standard of ethics.

Consider Commerce Casino - the state's largest card club and also the largest political contributor of the card clubs.

The attached article, researched and then published by the Orange County Register, describes how Commerce Casino spent nearly \$200,000 hiring Rev. Lou Sheldon and Rev. Steve Sheldon, two ministers who are described as having apparent loyalty to the tobacco and gambling interests, who pay them very well for that loyalty. Their job, for that money, was to organize churches in various cities to work in efforts to prevent any other city from competing with Commerce Casino by getting people to vote "NO" on new card club initiatives. Then, to make certain that all efforts were successful, the card club also hired Hal Mintz, described in the article as a disbarred lawyer, to help the Sheldons obtain the desired "NO" votes.

No Indian tribe has ever attempted to prevent lawful competition, nor has any tribe ever hired disbarred lawyers or ministers who put their names and titles out "for hire".

AB 1416 does not "limit gambling expansion", as supporters are claiming. The bill opens the door for a massive expansion of gambling. This will occur, just as soon as the existing moratorium, or even the proposed later moratorium, is over. At that time, even more cities and even more promoters will spend money to obtain new card club ordinances in cities all over the state. It is certain to happen.\*

If the legislature does pass AB 1416, then we urge Governor Gray Davis to veto the bill.

The Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) has already fined Commerce Casino and the Bicycle Club \$166,000 for illegal political activity. Does California need more of this dominance by the paid lobbyists and well-supported legislative "water-carriers"?

Please distribute this letter, and the attached article, at your discretion, to other members of the legislature.

**STOP AB 1416 !!**