

# OFFICE OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

**DuWAYNE GREGORY**  
SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATOR  
FIFTEENTH DISTRICT  
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## ***LETTER TO THE EDITOR***

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Local Approval is the Best Bet for Casinos**

Whatever your opinion on the appropriateness of allowing full scale commercial casinos in New York – there are good arguments for and against – common sense instructs that local government be included in the decision of whether they belong in our communities.

The bare minimum process required to amend our state constitution to allow gaming first requires: bills allowing these Atlantic City style casinos to pass the state legislature two years in a row, and then the issue must be put to the voters of New York as a statewide “yes or no” referendum question.

This process is now being fully engaged in Albany without a provision requiring local government or local voters to approve any proposed casino development in their county or city. Legislation already passed in 2012 and is expected to be addressed again in the next few months, with the statewide referendum vote planned for November 2013.

Simply stated: it’s preposterous that a casino could be built in Suffolk County without Suffolk County voters or legislators needing to approve it.

If there is a casino proposed for Suffolk (Shinnecock or otherwise), there needs to be a vote of the County Legislature or a countywide voter referendum on the issue, or both. Without local approval, Suffolk County voters will effectively be entirely excluded from having a voice in this decision.

– MORE, MORE, MORE –

The required statewide referendum cannot suitably represent our interests as other parts of the state have millions more voters than Suffolk County. There is no way for residents in Wheatley Heights, Wyandanch, Amityville, Copiague, North Lindenhurst, Babylon, or Farmingdale to influence a vote in which Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, Staten Island, and the Bronx are also participating in.

This urban / suburban tension is nothing new but in a process that could result in an investor-owned commercial casino being built near our homes and schools and houses of worship, it's imperative that there be a local approval requirement in addition to the statewide referendum.

In 2007 and in 2011, legislation to allow commercial casinos – this is not a new idea – specifically required approval from county legislators and voters. Whatever the justifications offered in Albany for why local approval isn't appropriate this time, Suffolk County neighborhoods should insist on having their voices heard through a controlling vote.

Casino developments have environmental consequences, alter traffic patterns, change Main Street shopping districts and our restaurants, impact social habits and, like any other large-scale project, change the surrounding community in ways both known and unknown. Amending our state constitution to allow commercial casinos is no small matter. A responsible, accountable approach should include a local vote properly representing local interests.

Sincerely yours,

DuWayne Gregory  
Suffolk County Legislative Majority Leader  
15<sup>th</sup> Legislative District