**NY Casinos need a voice**

**Steven Seidenstein**

Right now, there is little doubt that the battle for expanded casino gaming in the state of New York is coming to an epic fight in Albany. There are arguments on all sides of the issue, and since the beginning of America, when the gambling question comes up there is rarely a “no”. In looking into the history of Atlantic City’s attempts to get casino gambling, there is great opportunity to see what was done right and wrong for the citizens of a declining beachside resort.

It might surprise you to find out that in 1978 the fight to save Atlantic City through the introduction to casinos was not the first attempt. Just like we are experiencing in New Yorks capital region, there was pushback from advocacy groups and clergymen years before Atlantic City received its first slot machine. Laid back casino lobbyists felt more powerful and cocky that the measure would be smooth sailing in New Jersey. The fact is that the first attempt at casino gambling in Atlantic City failed due to messaging getting through to the population of New Jersey that struck fear of corruption and organized crime.

Just like in New York in 2025, there is a lot of power in the messaging that creates a doubtful fear into people. Anyone from politicians to family groups are at work in our state capital painting the image of old ladies and young college students hopelessly spending their last quarter in a slot machine. The truth is there are fewer than 4% of people who qualify as “problem gamblers” in our society, which is a fact that not many people are aware of.

The question must be asked is what people who support the idea of a casino can do. It would be important for the big companies to get out in front of this fight and get public relations firms to spread a positive message for New York communities. Unlike the impoverished town of Atlantic City in the 70s, places like Long Island and Manhattan have a good amount of population who are well off. Getting the benefit to the local communities through job creation alone is a good enough argument, but that might not be what is being heard.

With the legislation looming in the future, the politicians who support the idea of expanded casino gaming can take the time right now and start organizing gaming control boards. Even in the infancy of what’s to come, a local county can pay a commission even temporarily to ease the public’s concern over the introduction of gaming to their communities. Its time right now that the supporters of Casino legislation organize to have a common voice and message to their fellow New Yorkers.

Another strong need for making some noise to our politicians would be the workers unions. In Nevada since the introduction of legal gambling, the biggest and most powerful union in the state is the hotel workers unions. From culinary to construction there is just about no end to the benefit of unionized jobs in an area. Instead of waiting on the legislation in New York State, our local politicians can be getting union heads together and utilizing their money for advertising and influence in the state.

These are just a few ideas on things that can be done right now as in “Today”. Sitting around and waiting on the decision of bureaucracy makes no sense, and there should be individuals hired to start organizing the pro-gaming efforts. And “yes” my services are available!