

Warren County, “Just Say No”!

By Greg Baker –

How many casinos could a state of 3 million people really need?

On May 7, 2013 the people of Warren County, Iowa are going to be voting on whether or not to legalize gambling in Warren County. Wild Rose Entertainment has proposed to build a casino in Warren County, and they have promised millions of new tax dollars for the county and schools, as well as hundreds of new jobs. This is a story Iowans have all heard before: “If we build this casino it will bring in hundreds of jobs and jump start economic growth in our city.” Ever since legalizing riverboat casinos in 1989, Iowa has turned into a “Cornfield Vegas.” The state of Iowa has 18 casinos, with the city of Cedar Rapids and Norwalk now looking to add two more.

Does Iowa really want to model their economic development after the state of Nevada?

It appears to me that Iowa has become reliant on casinos to pay for its government, and for a source of economic development. It is almost like we are trying to become another Nevada, who has the notorious gambling cities of Reno and Las Vegas. Unfortunately, Nevada is known for more than their casinos. Here are a few others things they are known for: highest bankruptcy rate in the country, highest high school dropout rate, highest violent crime rate, third worst overall crime rate, fifth highest suicide rate, and according to Forbes Magazine, it is one of the worst states to retire in. Gallup polling also found Nevada as the fourth worst state to live in, while their neighboring state, Utah, was rated the best state to live (Utah is one of two states in America that doesn't allow gambling). For those who say gambling does not have an effect on culture, please explain Nevada to me.

What are the societal costs for bringing in a casino?

Norwalk should weigh if all these so-called "new money and jobs" is what Norwalk really needs. Norwalk is currently known as a quiet, safe community with excellent public schools and a great place to raise a family. Bringing in a casino would fundamentally change the city's culture. The once quiet, peaceful town will be filled with a gaudy Vegas-like atmosphere. It will no longer be the attractive community close to Des Moines that young families desire to move to. Instead, "What happens in Norwalk will stay in Norwalk."

Norwalk has so much potential to continue to grow and develop without this casino.

As the Des Moines metro continues to grow more and more, young families will desire to move to communities like Norwalk. If they build this casino, all they will get is short-term, quick growth with lingering socio-economic problems. If they wait, I believe Norwalk will continue to grow at a steady rate, but they will grow in a way that will be much more beneficial for the community long term. Waukee doesn't have a casino and they seem to be doing just fine. In fact, Hy-Vee and multiple other companies are looking to locate in Waukee. Norwalk will benefit much more in the long term if they choose to not build this casino.

What do these casino customers have to show at the end of a gambling day besides an empty wallet and constant sounds of a slot machine echoing over and over in their head?

I am not sure if you can really call a casino economic development. They prey off of the most vulnerable in society who often turn to casinos out of a desperate last resort.

Some get lucky and win big, but a vast majority find themselves on the fast track to bankruptcy. I have always said they do not build those big fancy buildings by giving out too much money. The only way they can give millions is by making millions more off Iowa residents.

The state of Iowa really needs to abandon the idea of using

what the Iowa Code considers a vice as our source of economic development and government growth. Iowa needs to find true economic development that brings good paying jobs to our state and doesn't prey on the poorest of our society. **Norwalk, please protect the culture and image of your beautiful community and vote No on this casino.**