

MATTHEW DOWLING, Member

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Dear Constituent,

I am writing you today to discuss House Bill 271, the omnibus gambling bill, which passed the House on June 7, with 102 votes. 89 members voted no.

This bill, if enacted, would do three positive things for Fayette County: First, it would **stabilize the Local Share Agreement**, which was previously found to be unconstitutional and risked the nearly \$10 million in funding to our local municipality and county. Secondly in this legislation, **Fayette County would receive additional funding**, which would provide additional grant funding for: EMS programs; fire departments; and parks and recreation programs. Finally, the bill would **eliminate the Amenity Fee for Class Three Casinos**, including *Lady Luck Casino Nemaocolin* in Farmington, allowing them to be more competitive.

In addition to the positives I mentioned above, House Bill 271 creates Video Gaming Terminals (VGTs). VGTs are one type of gaming expansion listed in the bill. In the legislation, a small-town bar or tavern owner could **LEGALLY** operate five gaming terminals in their facility. While I understand the potential for some limited cannibalization of our brick-and-mortar casinos, and possibly even the Pennsylvania Lottery, I also see positives for our region.

Through the legalization of VGTs, the bill would regulate and create tax revenue for an industry that currently operates as a gray market. Currently, no money is being received by the state in this gray market. There are no consumer protections in place.

In addition, there is also no oversight by the Gaming Control Board to ensure responsible gaming the way this industry currently operates.

House Bill 271 was supported by **local small businesses** and members of the PA Tavern Association. It creates a much more competitive gaming market, unlike the monopoly that was set up in 2004 that gives preferential treatment to **BIG BUSINESS**. This bill would help our local small businesses.

Recently, you may have received mail from a group in Pennsylvania making claims about this bill cutting services to seniors and harming the Pennsylvania Lottery. This bill does not directly do anything to

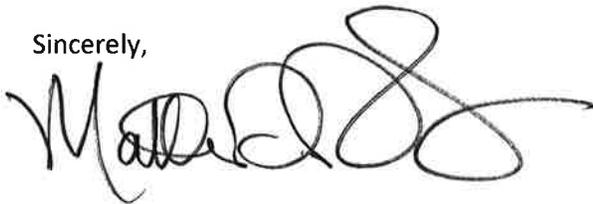
substantiate those claims! The organization making these claims – “*Pennsylvanians for Responsible Government*” is actually a group with very vested interests in the casino Industry.

On June 5, the *Allentown Morning Call* reported that the *Sands Casino* in Bethlehem would put more than \$1 million into this newly formed lobbying organization. The Sands Casino, is big business and while they may be saying that the “*Pennsylvanians for Responsible Government*” are worried about senior citizens they are not. They are simply worried about out-of-state, **BIG BUSINESSES** getting as much profit as possible from casinos.

House Bill 271 was sent to the Senate on June 7 and was referred to the *Senate Rules and Executive Nominations committee* on June 12. I am told that a compromise is being worked out and that the legislation will likely be sent back to the house for additional consideration.

This is an important revenue bill and could help us to balance the budget without increasing taxes! I am hopeful and optimistic that the Senate, who has had our budget now for nearly three months, will realistically consider the options in this bill rather than relying on tax increases --- increases that frankly our constituents, our seniors, our families cannot afford.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matthew D. Dowling', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Matthew D. Dowling
State Representative
51st Legislative District