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## Finance Committee Vote/Action Puts Casino Workers' Health in Jeopardy

Today, the Finance, Revenue & Bonding Committee of the General Assembly did not act on the ban on casino smoking, leaving the fate of this legislation in question and casino employees fuming.

“The Finance Committee has side-stepped the issue completely, potentially preventing legislators from exercising their responsibility to protect Connecticut workers’ safety. We will continue to get lung cancer, asthma, and heart disease from inhaling second-hand smoke at our jobs,” said Jack Edwards, a Foxwoods Dealer for 12 years. “If nothing further happens with this legislation, then our elected officials will have turned their backs on their obligation to protect working people in Connecticut. If anyone thinks the agreements the Governor has negotiated with the tribes help us, they are flat-out wrong.”

“The Mohegan and Mashantucket Pequot tribes have waged a public relations campaign designed to keep the status quo,” said Bob Madore, UAW Region 9A Director. “We have seen threats of withholding money, lawsuit threats, and studies not based on facts. But in truth, workers are the ones paying the price. And we will not stop defending the lives of casino employees until there is a full smoking ban.”

The legislative action today follows the Governor’s announcement Thursday of an agreement with the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe to make 80% of their property non-smoking. Neither the Governor nor the Tribe has released details of the agreement.

“What they’re *not* saying, is what’s important,” added Dave Barry, a Dual-Rate Dealer who has been at Foxwoods since it opened. “Foxwoods is not saying how much of the gaming floor will be smoke-free. Mohegan Sun still allows smoking on at least 75% of their gaming floor. In fact, there will be *more* smoke in dealer’s faces at both Foxwoods and Mohegan Sun when patrons move onto the gaming floor to have a cigarette.”

A 2007 New Jersey GASP (Group Against Smoking Pollution) study of casinos shows that when there are fewer smoking areas, smoke is concentrated in the remaining areas that allow smoking. In a casino that only has 30% smoking, for example, fine particulate air pollution is three times as great. And non-smoking sections in open areas adjacent to smoking sections were found to be 64% as polluted as smoking areas.

The UAW represents 2,500 Dealers and Dual-Rate Dealers at the Foxwoods Resort Casino since the vote to unionize in November, 2007.

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