



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MASSACHUSETTS

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LWVMA member Elaine Bono speaks at CasinoFREEMass regional meeting.

Elaine Bono of Falmouth, MA, formerly of Ledyard, CT, gave remarks at the CasinoFREEMass first regional meeting hosted to gather public support to oppose casino gambling in Massachusetts.

Elaine Bono was a CT resident for 30 years living in Ledyard for all but two of those 30 years. She experienced first hand the transformation of Ledyard from a small New England town to the host of the world's largest casino, Foxwoods. She served on the Ledyard planning commission from 1985-2001 during the time Foxwoods came to her community and forever changed the landscape of the town. Her knowledge of what casinos can do to a community is invaluable to Massachusetts's citizens as we consider Governor Patrick's proposal to bring casinos to the commonwealth.

Bono detailed for the audience of concerned citizens her experiences with increased traffic and unsafe driving conditions due to drunk drivers and speeders. Her community of Ledyard developed the fifth highest crime rate in the state, with increases in robbery, murder, drugs, prostitution, loan sharking, drunk driving, and embezzlement. Ledyard's tax collector embezzled over \$300K from the town to play slots. Bono said, "I myself was accosted in the casino parking lot. The small town of Ledyard (pop. 15,000) where people used to leave their home doors unlocked is no longer the same."

Increased costs for the local government of Ledyard were cited along with problems handling and enforcement of local zoning and planning regulations. Requiring additional costs for the town attorney and town hall employee time the need for more town hall employees and a regional planning agency. This was in addition to the increased load on the police and court system.

Bono witnessed declines in local businesses. Casinos have their own malls, gas stations, restaurants, movies, entertainment, and local business owners did not gain from the casino traffic. Instead, the resulting effect was a decreased attendance at local tourist attractions like Mystic Seaport, Mystic Aquarium, and Nautilus Submarine and local events. Chamber of Commerce and entire regional economic development has become casino-oriented and has lost its local charm.

The end result for Bono and her family was to leave Connecticut to escape the new community that had overtaken her beloved one. Her relocation to Falmouth Massachusetts as a haven from casinos is now in jeopardy, as it is for all citizens of the commonwealth.

For the past several months the League of Women Voters has been active in the growing movement to defeat the expansion of gambling in our state. As a supporter of the coalition CasinoFREEMass, the

LWVMA encourages concerned citizens to become involved in this movement. For more information visit www.lwvma.org.

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