

STATEMENT ON EXPANSION OF CASINO GAMBLING
by the Rev. Paul Rutgers
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Several times over the past few years, the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago has addressed the subject of Casino Gambling in the State of Illinois. Once again, this issue confronts us all.

The position of the Council has been consistent in the past and remains so today.

The Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago reaffirms its basic position that the continued spread of gambling is poor public policy and an inadequate response to the needs of the community. Gambling is regressive in its economic effect, morally repugnant to many, and is demonstrably harmful to a growing number of individuals and families. Whatever economic benefit may derive from the spread of gambling in Chicago and the State of Illinois will be far outweighed by its negative and debilitating effect upon our community and our private lives.

Many of the concerns expressed at the beginning of the expansion of gambling in the State have proved to be well founded: favoritism and profiteering, marginal returns to the host communities, growing numbers of lives and families corrupted by addiction to gambling, and a regular expansion of state and municipality dependence on income from "gaming's" returns. What began as bad idea remains a bad idea still.

It is more than understandable that Mayor Daly and the city's administration should feel pressured to seek a larger share of casino gambling's revenues for Chicago. The city faces growing financial pressure as it struggles to maintain its place as one of the world's greatest cities. We are proud of our city and all those things that make it great, and we applaud the many ways in which our mayor has lead the way in making this so.

The felt need to expand further embrace casino gambling hides a deeper malady. Misguided national priorities and outdated Illinois tax policies that fail to address the real needs of our people and our communities need to be challenged and changed. The State of Illinois and the City of Chicago should not have to face the choice that now confronts them. Other choices present far better odds to enrich the city's treasury and nourish the city's soul.

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