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— ONLINE EDITION —  
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VOICE OF THE PEOPLE (LETTER)

# Illinois casinos face excessive taxation

Douglas Whitley, President  
Illinois Chamber  
*Published February 12, 2003*

Chicago -- While the Chicago Tribune has traditionally been a champion for Illinois business and economic activity, the Jan. 31 editorial "Casinos crying poor--again " ignored business fundamentals.

Exceedingly high costs of doing business, in this case taxes and limitations on expansion, are not economically sustainable--be it for casinos, the Tribune Co. or any other enterprise.

Taxes imposed on Illinois casinos are by far the highest in the nation.

Paying a top tax rate of 50 percent of gross receipts before other taxes is excessive.

The high costs of doing business in Illinois affect operating decisions, such as adding employees, wages and benefits, advertising, promotions, capital improvements, charitable giving and profits. It is a truism for every industry.

The marketplace tells us that Illinois casinos are losing business--and thus tax revenue--to casinos in Indiana and Missouri.

You should not deny that better operating margins resulting from more favorable tax situations are a business advantage to the neighboring gaming facilities. Patrons make destination choices and that means Illinois casinos must compete for customers.

Job creation and capital investment are nurtured by lower costs, including a favorable tax and regulatory climate. We often expect politicians to conveniently ignore economic reality but not a commercial enterprise like the Tribune.

The recently released study co-sponsored by the Illinois Chamber and the Illinois Casino Gaming Association demonstrates that the Illinois economy and the state's treasury could benefit by creating an environment that is more favorable to investment.

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