



Bonner Springs/Edwardsville
Unified School District 204

Teaching today's learners for tomorrow's challenges

Wednesday, February 15, 2017

TO: Kansas Legislators
FROM: USD 204
RE: OPPOSE HB 2173 & any changes to 2007 gaming laws

This memo is being sent on behalf of the USD 204 Bonner Springs/Edwardsville Board of Education as well as our students, staff, administrators, parents and patrons. The issues that accompany a potential reopening of the Woodlands are crucial to all concerned. As such, we'd like to share a brief reaffirmation of our position on the matter. It has not changed.

As a board, we strong support a vibrant, ever-growing tax base as a key component in funding not only quality education, but our state's overall budget. That said, our study and discussion leave us convinced that no change should be made to the 2007 legislation under which gaming currently is conducted in Wyandotte County. This is a complex issue, but our fundament reasons are two-fold:

1. **We firmly believe that the current law works.** The Woodlands could have been or can be reopened at any time. The 2007 legislation, which the thoroughbred industry no only supported but helped to draft, easily permits this. While we understand that the 2017 Legislature is still in its early days and more bills might be drafted, it is important to note that previous attempts to alter the 2007 bill contained provisions that would have – at best – benefitted a reopened Woodlands only at the expense of Hollywood Casino. That is clearly the case with HB 2173. There would be no net gains in either employment or tax revenue for gaming in Wyandotte County under new rules and further, no enhanced benefits for taxpayers and citizens in Kansas City, Kansas. Furthermore, the existing 2007 law appears to be perfectly consistent with tax structures and regulations governing horse racing in other parts of the country. We sense no groundswell of public support to reopen The Woodlands, with the calls to do so coming only from the thoroughbred industry that would gain from it.
2. **Hollywood Casino and Kansas Entertainment have earned and deserve our support.** These organizations have, simply put, held fast to the promises they made from the onset. The casino's tax rate was established, in part,

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Director of Business /Board Clerk – Eric Hansen*

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based on the commitment to invest \$225 million in development in our community. In fact, more than \$300 million has been invested in the local community which is well above the level required.

We believe more could be said to expand on both of these points, but the bottom line is that we are unwilling to risk all of the positive impacts that we – and countless other institutions, businesses and individuals – have enjoyed thanks to the Hollywood Casino to support a speculative venture that has already once failed. And while we're on the subject of risk...

3. Children in Wyandotte County cannot afford a non or underperforming Hollywood Casino. The educational experience of every local public k-12 student has been enhanced in part by the casino's revenues, but none more than the students in Bonner Springs and Edwardsville. USD 204 is the casino's host district. Hollywood Casino is the district's single largest generator of property tax revenues. It is vital to our future.

In closing, if reconstituted under proposed changes, horse racing in Wyandotte County would benefit only a few persons with narrow interests. We urge your rejection of any such legislation.

Thank you,

USD 204 Board of Education President/Superintendent

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