

## EXPANDED GAMBLING IN MASSACHUSETTS COMING UNDER FIRE



The state of Massachusetts already has legal gambling, but there are some groups that wish to expand gambling laws in the state in order to create three new casinos. Those in favor of expanded gambling in the state claim that the new legislation will help to create new jobs across the state. The foes of the expanded legislation claim that no new jobs will be created, that it is a 'wildly optimistic' view, and that revenue projections are outdated. The state Senate has resumed its debate regarding the expanded gambling legislation, which has already been passed by the state's House of Representatives. The legislation, if passed, would allow for the licensing of one slots parlor in the state and three resort-style casinos in the state too. The group against the legislation, Citizens for a Stronger Massachusetts, is led by former Attorney General Scott Harshbarger. Harshbarger and his group released the following statement: "The public is being sold a bill of goods and our new analysis should blow the rose-colored glasses off proponents and force them to rethink this poor excuse for economic development and local aid." Those in the legislative field who are in favor of the bill believe that the new casinos will boost the state's economy by bringing in close to \$300 million. Legislators also believe that the expanded legislation would create 15,000 jobs in the casinos and 6,000 temporary construction jobs for those building the casinos. The Citizens for a Stronger Massachusetts, citing the United States Department of Commerce, claim that the casinos would cause the state to lose not only money but also jobs. The statistics say that Massachusetts would lose 8.2 jobs for every \$1 million in household spending that is spent at the casinos. This turns out to be around 5,700-10,600 jobs lost within the state. Massachusetts Senate president Therese Murray released the following statement to opponents of the legislation, who call the job creation elitist: "They are jobs with benefits and they are jobs that pay you a salary." Citizens for a Stronger Massachusetts claim that those in favor of the expanded gambling legislation are using statistics from before the country's recession, which clouds how much money the casinos will make and how many jobs will actually be created. Instead, the Citizens for a Stronger Massachusetts fear that the legalization of casinos in the state will cost the state \$90 million or more due to a 50 to 10 percent drop in state lottery sales. The profits from the state lottery are returned to the cities and towns within Massachusetts, which is another reason for the opposition to the legislation. "Tell me where the special interests are?" Murray asked. "Are people without jobs special interests? I think so and that's why we are doing this." There is no word yet on when the Senate will vote on the legislation but differences between the Senate's version and the House's version will need to be worked out by a conference committee that will consist of three representatives from each branch.