

READERS' LETTERS

Sen. DiPalma takes courageous stand against expanded gambling

One local legislator deserves the thanks of all who care about the future of our community. Sen. Louis DiPalma, D-Middletown, was one of two state senators — and the only one from Newport County — who voted against the recent bill for yet another referendum on casino gambling in Newport.

I don't know Sen. DiPalma, but I hope voters in District 12 will remember his name when he comes up for re-election.

Of course, most of the other Newport County legislators say they are against casino gambling, too. They cover themselves with the pious-sounding phrase, "I'm just voting for the referendum so the people can decide."

That sounds so democratic and fair. But what it really does is open the floodgates of advertising money from deep-pocketed gambling interests. They can buy TV ads far beyond what ordinary citizens can afford.

Furthermore, the people of Newport have decided, over and over again, that we do not want to establish a gambling culture in our community. As numerous studies have shown, gambling does not produce any goods or services that enrich the local economy, nor does it provide professional or career employment for those looking to settle in the community and raise a family. Rather, it fosters a get-lucky, get-rich mentality

that tends to burden those who can least afford to waste their money. It's a short-term fix for our long-term economic problems.

But the legislature has spoken. This fall, a referendum to allow full-scale casino gambling in Newport (not on Bellevue Avenue, yet) will be on the ballot. It will be up to ordinary citizens — you and me — to oppose the well-funded gambling interests in this battle to shape our future. Fair? No, it sounds like a David-and-Goliath scenario.

But remember, it was the kid with the slingshot who won that battle.

Roland F. Chase, Newport