

Like Deval Patrick, Massachusetts House Speaker Robert DeLeo would oppose a casino in his hometown

Robert DeLeo casinos 112211.jpg

11.22.2011 | BOSTON -- Speaker of the House Robert DeLeo, left, looks to Gov. Deval Patrick, as he spoke during the signing ceremony for a bill legalizing casino gambling in Massachusetts, at the Statehouse in Boston. *(Photo by Josh Reynolds / Associated Press [file])*

State House News Service By **State House News Service**

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By **MATT MURPHY**

BOSTON — First it was Gov. **Deval Patrick who said he would not support a casino** in his second hometown of Richmond.

But as voters in communities around the state continue to reject casinos within their borders, House Speaker **Robert DeLeo** says he also would vote against a casino in his town of Winthrop if one were proposed there.

"I don't know about Winthrop. Winthrop doesn't have enough space, so let me just put that right out there. If Winthrop was in another location and we had enough space, I'd say so. We're having difficulty right now just trying to figure out where to put a high school and a middle school combination, but obviously I would be supportive if I live in a place with proper space," DeLeo said Wednesday.

Voters in Milford on Tuesday night rejected a proposed Foxwoods casino off Interstate 495, following similar negative votes in East Boston and Palmer this month.

"What I envisioned was when we wrote the legislation, and obviously it came to a final vote, was that any community that did not want a casino wasn't going to have a casino, no matter what . . . This has proven us correct," DeLeo said.

DeLeo was a force behind the expanded gaming law that turns two-years-old on Friday, but he also has an appreciation for the not-in-my-back-yard sentiment that has scuttled a number of casino proposals.

"If I lived in a place that had enough space for a casino, and quite frankly there were concerns about traffic that they didn't address, if there were concerns about them working with our local communities in terms of about police presence and fire presence that they didn't work out then no, I would not be supportive. The concept itself yes, but with the proviso though that they would have to work out some of the details of concern to the local communities," DeLeo said.

Supporters of a proposed ballot question repealing the 2011 casino law reported late Wednesday that they

had filed more than 90,000 signatures locally by a 5 p.m. deadline. Initiative petition sponsors need at least 68,911 certified signatures to advance in the process toward the 2014 ballot.

Repeal the Casino Deal noted West Springfield and Foxborough had also turned down casino plans.

Voters in Everett, Taunton and Springfield have voted to host casinos in their cities.

Attorney General Martha Coakley has ruled the casino law repeal proposal is not eligible for the ballot, but repeal opponents hope the Supreme Judicial Court will rule that it is eligible. Noting applicants have invested in the legal process of applying for casino licenses, analysts in the attorney general's office say contract rights are considered property and may not be "taken" by an initiative petition.

"Like all our battles, this one was hard fought and we're not certain of the outcome but we're hopeful we have enough to move ahead," John Ribeiro, chairman of the Repeal the Casino Deal Committee, said in a statement.

Michael Norton contributed reporting

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