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## **Mahoning Valley Legislators Meet with Bowling Alley Owners to Discuss Striking Proposal**

Representatives Ron Gerberry (D-Austintown), and Bob Hagan (D-Youngstown), and Senator Joe Schiavoni (D-Canfield) attended an evening reception at Camelot Lanes June 15 to talk to local and regional bowling alley owners about expanded gaming in Ohio.

The frank conversation centered on the \$3.2 billion deficit in Ohio's state budget.

State policymakers will either need to cut social services, raise taxes, or find additional revenue sources. Ohio bowling center owners are offering to raise over 130 million each year for the state by installing 10 video lottery terminals (VLTs) in 300 bowling centers in Ohio.

"Many bowling alleys are second generation businesses that have been in our communities for over 40 years. Camelot Lanes employs Ohioans and pays Ohio taxes. We are constantly reinvesting in our facilities. It would be smart business to add gaming," said Peppe Smith, owner of Camelot Lanes.

Representative Gerberry stated, "I believe that allowing bowling centers to install VLT's is a natural fit. Bowling alley owners are already in the entertainment business."

"I support my local community and local businesses, and if gambling comes to Ohio I would like to see my local businesses benefit. The budget deficit is like a 7-10 split. It is almost impossible to pick it up unless you change your approach," added Hagan.

Senator Schiavoni recognizes the need to protect the long established bowling alleys in his district and said, "I will do what I can in my caucus to encourage my peers to seriously consider this proposal. Every day people in the Valley take a short drive out of Ohio to spend their money in neighboring states."

Peppe Smith summarized, "A small group of The Bowling Centers of Ohio started high school bowling conferences in Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, and the Mahoning Valley some years back. I am working with the same proprietors today. We are a well organized trade association. If our proposal is accepted, we can bring cash to the state coffers in a matter of months."

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