

**Testimony of the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce
On Bills 080027 and 080028 before Philadelphia City Council**

April 30, 2008

Good afternoon President Verna and members of the Rules Committee. For the record, I am Joseph W. Mahoney, Jr., Executive Vice President of the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce. I come before you today in support of Bills 080027 and 080028. These bills would change the zoning designations of certain areas of land and approve the Plan of Development for a Commercial Entertainment District, respectively.

The Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce (GPCC) has long been a proponent of sound economic development and has supported the concept of gaming since the 1990's when then Mayor, Ed Rendell proposed Riverboat gambling as a vehicle to reduce the wage tax for Philadelphians and commuters alike.

The GPCC has sent letters of support and or appeared before this committee on numerous occasions in 2007 to support the development of the two casino sites along the Delaware River. The GPCC's support has always been from a purely economic vision of what gaming could do for the city in the way of **increased revenues, jobs and reduced taxes.**

The project specifically being considered today is the development of the Foxwoods Casino in South Philadelphia. This proposed project will develop a blighted 16.5 acre parcel of commercial land into a 3.7 million square foot facility that will include shops, restaurants, entertainment venues, a casino, parking and a public riverfront walkway. The first phase of this three pronged project will bring 3,000 slot machines to the waterfront. As gaming revenues across the Commonwealth are running better than anticipated, gaming revenues will reduce the FY 2009 Philadelphia residential city wage tax rate from 4.169 percent to 3.93 percent, while it will go from 3.685 percent to 3.5 percent for suburban commuters.

We all know that in these times of a slow economy and high gas prices, jobs are more precious than ever. The first phase of this project alone will create 950 new permanent jobs and approximately 1,000 construction jobs. These are jobs right here in our own back yard where residents may be able to walk to work and avoid paying \$3.50 a gallon for gas.

Foxwoods Casino will contribute financially to a Special Services District that will support traffic mitigation, education, safety and security, supplemental city services and senior citizen programs—all the ingredients of a better neighborhood!

As stated earlier in my testimony, the GPCC has testified on this issue several times and each and every time we recognized the potential for traffic congestion. We have agreed to support efforts to mitigate traffic congestion in these areas.

The GPCC fully appreciates the position of the Administration and this elected Council to address the concerns of Philadelphia residents. We believe the Foxwoods

Casino project is an economic driver that will bring years, if not decades, of much needed revenue and jobs to the city.

On behalf of the GPCC, I respectfully request that you vote these bills out of committee with a favorable recommendation.

Thank you for this opportunity.