

# Groups sue over Philly casinos

Several neighborhood civic groups sued state gambling regulators today over their approval of two Philadelphia casinos.

The plaintiffs fear the casinos will bring traffic congestion, pollution, increased crime and other problems to their neighborhoods. They said the public had no chance to comment on the proposals after the Nov. 15 application deadline.

The Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board granted licenses to build a Foxwoods casino on the Delaware River waterfront in South Philadelphia and the SugarHouse casino a few miles upriver.

The groups also allege that former commission Chairman Tad Decker should have excluded himself earlier in the process because of his close ties to a law firm, Cozen O'Connor, that represents SugarHouse's developer. Decker left the firm to serve as the gaming board chairman for three years and has since returned as its president and chief executive officer.

The suit was filed in federal court by civic groups in the neighborhoods of Pennsport, Society Hill, Northern Liberties and Old City, along with several individual residents.

Casino opponents tried in vain to hold a public referendum in the May primary on the issue and failed in challenging the licenses in state court.

Mary DiGiacomo Colins, the gaming board's chairwoman, said the process has already been deemed lawful by state courts.

„It is crystal clear through previous judicial decisions that the board actions in determining the recipients of gaming

licenses in Philadelphia were both lawful and appropriate," she said in a statement Monday.

Decker was not immediately available for comment.