

# Pledge made to change law if Maine casino approved

Portland, Maine – The Las Vegas company that wants to develop a USD 184 million casino and resort in western Maine is pledging that no one under 21 would be allowed to gamble or work in the casino if voters approve the proposal on Election Day.

Dean Harrold of Olympia Gaming said Thursday that he also opposes giving the casino a monopoly or giving the casino president seats on various boards. To prove his point, he signed a pledge on a 24-by-36-inch poster board in front of reporters and TV cameras.

„This is our word and we stand by it,“ he said.

Mainers will vote Tuesday on a referendum, Question 2 on the ballot, asking if they want to allow a casino in Oxford County.

If Mainers approve the measure, Olympia Gaming plans to build a four-season resort casino dubbed Oxford Highlands in the town of Oxford. The project would be built in two stages and include a 300-room hotel, a conference center, restaurants and a casino with up to 1,500 slot machines and a variety of table games.

As now written, the referendum includes a number of controversial provisions, including lowering the state’s casino gambling age from 21 to 19, placing a 10-year moratorium on building other casinos in Maine and putting the casino president on a number of boards that benefit from casino revenues. It also would allow the casino to extend credit to gamblers whose money runs out.

Olympia Gaming has previously acknowledged that the referendum

as now worded is flawed. Campaign spokeswoman Pat LaMarche said this month that a gallon of Wite-Out was needed to fix problems written into the proposal, but that it's too late to change them before the election.

On Thursday, LaMarche said she has „full faith“ that the Legislature will rewrite the parts of the referendum that need changing.

„This is a pretty easy fix,“ she said.

Dennis Bailey, spokesman for CasinosNO!, said Olympia Gaming is putting big money behind a bill it admits has problems. If the question passes, it will become law before the Legislature has a chance to do anything about it, he said.

„A pledge by a Las Vegas executive who stands to make millions from Maine people if this passes isn't worth the paper it's printed on,“ he said.

A home buyer wouldn't purchase a house with a leaky basement before the problem was fixed, Bailey said, and Maine voters shouldn't buy into a referendum that's plagued with problems.

„Their motto should be, ‚It's a mess. Vote yes,‘“ Bailey said.

LaMarche said it's important to let people know that Olympia Gaming supports changing the questionable parts of the law so that the campaign can stay on its message.

„The message is new jobs, a USD 33 million payroll, real opportunity, the chance for the area community to grow and prosper,“ she said.