

# Rockford Casino Coalition



## NEW ROCKFORD CASINO COALITION KICKS OFF ADVOCACY EFFORTS

*Group Launches Initiative In Support of Casino Legislation,  
Calls on Governor Quinn to Sign SB 0744*

**June 23, 2011 (Rockford, IL)**—The Rockford Casino Coalition – a newly formed group advocating for a casino in Rockford – launched a campaign today encouraging Illinois Governor Pat Quinn to sign Senate Bill 0744.

During a news conference held at Riverfront Museum Park, area business leaders and chief elected officials called on Governor Quinn to sign SB 0744 noting the importance of job creation and economic development in Rockford, a city hit hard in recent recessions.

This is a call to action asking the community to contact Governor Quinn to urge him to sign SB 0744. The campaign's goal is to demonstrate the community's collective support and need for this legislation. "Our coalition aims to speak with a clear, consistent voice. The Rockford region knows far too well the economic realities left behind in the wake of recent recessions. We see a Rockford casino as one element, a tool in our economic toolkit, that we can use to create jobs and grow our region's economy," said John Groh, president/CEO of the Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, and a member of the coalition.

In addition to Groh, Janyce Fadden, president of the Rockford Area Economic Development Council and Einar Forsman, president/CEO of the Rockford Chamber of Commerce spoke at the news conference. The three initial partner organizations represent more than 1,500 organizations and their 60,000 employees. Additional coalition members will be announced in the coming days and weeks. Rockford Mayor Larry Morrissey and Winnebago County Board Chairman Scott Christiansen also spoke.

Should Gov. Quinn sign the bill, the potential for revenue generation and economic development opportunities in the state and the Rockford area is significant. Gaming expansion in Illinois would generate an estimated \$1.5 billion in up-front fees and \$500 million in recurring annual funds for the state. This additional revenue would allow the state to meet its General Fund obligations.

As noted in the news conference, Rockford has been one of the hardest hit cities in this struggling economy; it leads the state with the highest levels of unemployment and lags other cities in job creation. The new construction and operational positions within the actual casino and throughout the local hospitality and tourism industries would significantly boost job creation in Rockford.

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The Rockford Casino Coalition is urging area businesses, organizations and individuals to join the coalition in support of Governor Quinn signing SB0744. In the coming days and weeks the coalition will continue to offer information showing the significant impact a casino will make as the bill awaits Quinn’s signature. Residents, organizations and businesses are encouraged to

- sign the online petition at [www.rockfordcasinocoalition.com](http://www.rockfordcasinocoalition.com),
- visit the group’s Facebook page, Rockford Casino Coalition and
- call the Governor at 217-782-0244 to urge him to sign the bill.

*The Rockford Casino Coalition was formed in support for the gaming expansion bill (SB 0744) and encourages Governor Pat Quinn to sign the bill. The Coalition’s founding partners represent more than 1,500 organizations and their 60,000 employees. For more information, visit the Coalition’s Facebook page, Rockford Casino Coalition or [www.rockfordcasinocoalition.com](http://www.rockfordcasinocoalition.com).*

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:** John Groh, RACVB: 815.963.8111, [jgroh@gorockford.com](mailto:jgroh@gorockford.com) or Cassi Steurer, PR Etc.: 815.282.9976, [csteuerer@pretc.net](mailto:csteuerer@pretc.net)

## **Rockford Casino Coalition Participant Quotes**

### **Rockford Chamber of Commerce President/CEO, Einar Forsman**

“This is a critical opportunity that our region cannot afford to miss out on. We need to show the governor that we want this casino and that we especially need the economic boost it would bring.”

### **Rockford Area Economic Development Council President, Janyce Fadden**

“This legislation is a positive economic development opportunity for the region, one that could generate between \$7 and \$10 million in additional revenue that we would leverage for economic development.”

### **Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau President/CEO, John Groh**

“A casino in Rockford would be a game changer. Situated near Wisconsin, and close to major population centers, a Rockford casino would provide a new reason for visitors to come to Rockford – and they’ll come in droves. The influx of new visitors would have a positive impact on job creation and tax generation.”

### **Rockford Mayor Larry Morrissey**

“This is about job creation and economic growth. A casino will create more than 1,500 jobs in Rockford and provide revenue for vital infrastructure projects.”

### **Winnebago County Board Chairman Scott Christiansen**

“The overall impact of a casino would be significant from a regional perspective. Gaming expansion will create a ripple effect through the construction and small business industries, generating more growth and opportunities.”