

# ANTE UP FOR ROSEMONT

**A**h, spring, when a young man's fancy turns to free drink coupons, windowless noisy rooms and Caribbean-style poker!

As the State of Illinois decides the fate of its 10<sup>th</sup> gambling license, allegations continue to fly that the people pushing for a casino in Rosemont have links to organized crime. Recently, the governor and the attorney general have investigations underway. Good for them for being righteously shocked, but my guess is, most of the rest of us are only "shocked, shocked," in a "Casablanca" / Claude Raines kind of way.

Mob connections? What would you expect? It's gambling, for cryin' out loud. Good old, nefarious, predatory, "something for nothing and don't forget something for the boys in the back room" gambling. A casino license isn't going to be pursued by the good folks at Bakers Square or an alliance of church and synagogue leaders. And please, let's avoid the euphemism "gaming." That only conjures images of expensive casinos dedicated to hard-core Yahtzee and Candy-Land players. "Welcome to the Milton-Bradley Four-leaf Clover Casino!" No, this is gambling, impure and simple.

Instead of a lot of complicated investigations and public hearings to which all parties can be held accountable, I suggest that from now on, Illinois take a page from the Las Vegas playbook in awarding these licenses. Let's sit down with the heads of the interested enterprises around a table, an octagonal table covered in green felt, and let them place some friendly wagers on their chances of getting an available license. After all, turnabout is fair play, especially when the house gets its 3 percent off the top.

Each player can buy a chip for every \$50 grand his company would invest in a casino, and each chip will cost, say, 20 grand. Hey, you have to spend money to make money—so put it down as the cost of doing business. We start with a few hands of Texas Hold'em. The house, of course, will be the State of Illinois. For the dealer in this scenario, you can insert the face of your favorite politician, under a green visor or in a red vest and bow tie, muttering something statesmanlike. Maybe throw in free drinks and a \$3.99 all-you-can-eat buffet.

Then the deal begins.

You'd assume these companies would be good with numbers; I'd like to see them on the spot under hot lights, calculating the odds of drawing to an inside straight. If someone hits a streak of bad luck but wants to stay in the game, maybe the State can extend the enterprise a little credit at, say, 50% interest.

Our friendly little game then proceeds for 10 or 12 or 20 hours, however long the players can hold up, and the winner gets the gambling franchise, plus the chance for a

piece of the state lottery action. Of course, whoever wins a franchise can't just walk off with the winnings. They have to come back to the table and spend more next year, and the year after that, and the year after that. If we keep these groups all busy enough, maybe the State of Illinois can be the one to make some serious mazoomah. Hey, you don't have to be a racketeer to build up a nice racket.



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