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Del Pointe is a winning bet

The truth is, it's good for horsemen, the budget and the state

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We live in a great state, but right now Delaware and its citizens are suffering from the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression.

Thousands of people have lost their jobs and the state is suffering from an unprecedented budget shortfall. There are many ways we can address our budget shortfall, but most of these solutions place a huge burden on Delaware citizens or state employees.

The Del Pointe project is one way to create a large amount of state revenue via a voluntary method. A third-party market study estimated that Del Pointe will generate \$75 million in state revenue annually, more than double the amount needed to eliminate the proposed 2.5 percent state employee pay cut.

In addition, Del Pointe would support 6,000 jobs during construction and 2,000 jobs upon completion. Delawareans are suffering. This is no time to turn a blind eye to the jobs and revenue this project will create simply to protect the special interests of the existing racinos.

I'd like to address some of the arguments being disseminated by the racinos:

*** The horsemen don't support Del Pointe:** Del Pointe is a great thing for horsemen no matter how you slice it. Not only does Del Pointe increase the overall purse (prize money) available for horsemen in Delaware via additional gaming revenues, but it also creates the state's first one-mile harness racetrack, which any horseman will tell you is much better for horses than a one-half mile track (Harrington has a one-half mile track and Dover has a five-eighths-mile track). Opposition to Del Pointe by the horsemen leadership is a direct result of the empty threats from Harrington and Dover that they will significantly reduce their racing days if Del Pointe is approved. Many horsemen have told us "off the record" that they are hugely supportive of Del Pointe but could get in trouble if they went public with their support.

•Del Pointe may put Harrington Raceway out of business: The lack of validity of this claim has been somewhat exposed in the media as Harrington has been very reluctant to open its books to Gov. Jack Markell's administration. Although the racinos have experienced a slight decline in gaming revenues during this recession, they are all still making profits that other businesses would die for in this economic environment. Dover Downs is twice as close to Harrington as Del Pointe, so if anyone is competing with Harrington, it is Dover Downs, not Del Pointe.

•Del Pointe may jeopardize the Harrington State Fair: Let's suppose Harrington Raceway does go out of business (which is highly unlikely) and the state fair subsidy goes away. Delaware can simply take a very small fraction of the revenue generated from Del Pointe and use this money to support the state fair. The state will still be much better off, and the state fair will be just fine. Further, the Harrington State Fair operated successfully for many years before Harrington Raceway had slot machines. So, the evidence simply doesn't support this argument.

•**The 'gaming pie' in Delaware is fixed:** If the demand for gaming has nothing to do with geographic location and convenience of travel, then using this logic, we only need one casino in the entire country, because the gambling "pie is fixed" and won't change regardless of travel time and convenience. This obviously isn't true. Most importantly, Delaware does not have a casino to serve its largest tourist market: The beach communities. Right now, with the recent approval of slot machines in Ocean Downs in Berlin, Md., Delaware stands to lose all the gaming revenue generated by our beach market to Maryland. So, with or without Del Pointe, Harrington Raceway is not going to capture gaming revenue from Delaware's beach market. Del Pointe is simply a way to make sure the large amount of gaming revenue generated by our beach market goes to support Delaware teachers, police, etc., and not to support Maryland.

Our legislators are good people. In the end, I am confident they will put their relationships with the existing racinos aside and do what is best for Delaware and its citizens.
