



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS

M. JODI RELL
GOVERNOR

June 10, 2010

The Honorable Susan Bysiewicz
Secretary of the State
20 Trinity Street
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Secretary Bysiewicz:

I hereby return without my signature House Bill 5236, *An Act Concerning Additional Off-Track Betting Branch Facilities in New London, Manchester and Windham*. This bill authorizes three additional facilities to have screens for the simulcasting of off-track betting race programs or jai alai games in the towns of New London, Manchester and Windham. This is a worrisome and growing trend.

Legislative history indicates that the Legislature has been incrementally adding to the permissible number of simulcast screens since 1989. In that year, the Legislature first increased the number of off-track betting branch facilities that could simulcast games from one to three. However, since 2007 alone, four additional facilities have been authorized, including one facility in Putnam and one in Milford. The 2010 Act allows yet three more facilities to simulcast games, for a statewide total of 15.

I am troubled that these authorizations are being requested for particular restaurants or venues as quick fixes to a difficult economic climate and to offset low customer counts. Testimony provided at the public hearing touted the fact that as a result of last year's bill, business improved appreciably at a restaurant in Putnam and upon this bill's passage, simulcast viewing of races is expected to attract a large number of customers at a new restaurant in New London.

In fact, based upon these visions of success, two venues, one in Manchester and one in Windham, were added to this year's bill, which had originally just mentioned New London. It has been reported that the owner of a bar and grill in Manchester is excited about the potential boom to his daytime business that simulcast gambling will provide, stating "Our day business has been our Achilles heel from day one. We're on the outskirts of Manchester. Most of the people aren't coming out here for lunch. They don't have enough time in the day, so we do suffer during the day." Restaurant patrons should be attracted and enticed by atmosphere, price, service, quality, menu and other such factors, not by availability of gambling.

We cannot amend our statutes every time a restaurant owner complains that business has been down. Permitting additional screens to simulcast horse races and jai alai is neither a viable life-line for Connecticut's businesses, nor the answer to an ailing economy. Rather, we must develop innovative and all-encompassing solutions intended to promote economic development across the state. We cannot and should not engage in piecemeal policymaking, one restaurant at a time. Our citizens and our businesses deserve a more thoughtful and comprehensive approach to economic development and public policy.

For these reasons, pursuant to Section 15 of Article Fourth of the Constitution of the State of Connecticut and Article III of the Amendments thereto, I am returning this bill without my signature.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Jodi Rell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

M. Jodi Rell
Governor