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## **Cleveland Business Leaders Approve Plan for Advancing Statewide Casino Legalization**

*Greater Cleveland Partnership Board of Directors Outlines Provisions Necessary for Support of Statewide Gaming Proposal; Approves Plan to Proceed With Building Statewide Coalition Aimed at Legalizing Casinos*

**Cleveland, September 15, 2005**—During the quarterly meeting of the Greater Cleveland Partnership Board of Directors, a resolution was accepted that will engage GCP leadership in further exploration of legalized casino gaming in Ohio. GCP will undertake the building of a statewide coalition among metropolitan regions and public officials to develop the components of a constitutional amendment to permit casino gaming in Ohio based on guidelines approved yesterday. The second phase of the plan requires a review of the outcome of the first phase and a vote by the board on whether to endorse a specific constitutional amendment that would legalize casinos.

GCP and several Cincinnati businesses recently released the results of two studies that were commissioned to examine the potential economic impact and social costs of legalized casino gaming in Ohio. Upon reviewing the results of the study, members of the GCP Board of Directors voted to approve a two-phased plan for advancing casino gaming in Ohio.

“Armed with the facts, Cleveland’s private sector leaders are prepared to begin the process of participating in the public debate and shaping a gaming policy for Ohio,” said Alexander M. Cutler, Chairman of the GCP Board of Directors. “While casino gaming is not the answer to everything that ails Ohio, an examination of the studies makes it clear that Ohio gaming dollars are being spent in neighboring states, while problem gamblers who live in our communities are chronically underserved by limited state funding for treatment. A satisfactory gaming proposal would capture the Ohio dollars that leave our state, while also taking significantly increased care of our citizens who already suffer from gambling addictions.”

According to the resolution, the continued participation of GCP in the first phase would be conditional on the formation of a proposed constitutional amendment that includes these key principles:

1. New tax revenues derived from gaming in Ohio must be competitively optimized and benefits shared between all residents of Ohio and the local communities eventually chosen for gaming locations. Such revenues should not be used to replace or reduce current State funding provided to local governments. Local revenues must be invested in job creation and economic development strategies developed by local public and civic leadership in areas such as tourism and business development.

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2. Clear criteria for selecting final casino locations must be identified that closely mirror those identified in the GCP gaming study. Using these criteria, the geographic locations (not site specific) of casinos should be identified.
3. A significant portion of the new gaming revenues must be budgeted for education/prevention/treatment of existing and future problem and pathological gamblers in the state.
4. An acceptable governance model for casino gaming is created. Licensing fees are estimated and proceeds earmarked to state and local economic development entities and strategies.
5. Acceptable ways of addressing high priority local concerns, including input on ownership of casinos, specific locations of casinos, and strategies for minimizing degree and duration of local product substitution while maximizing opportunities for small business.

The second phase described by the resolution states:

If and when (expected by the end of calendar year, 2005) a true statewide coalition of business and private sector leadership in Ohio reaches a consensus that incorporates the above principles, the GCP Board will reconsider its full endorsement of casino gaming. This will provide the GCP Board with the opportunity to evaluate the coalition's final consensus before finally endorsing a campaign for a constitutional amendment to permit casino gaming on the November 2006 ballot. If the coalition is unable to develop a consensus within this timeframe, then the practical likelihood of a successful campaign would not exist and future activity or support would become moot and possibly counter-productive to advancing other GCP priorities.

"Gaming options already loom in Columbus and they might not be in the best interest of our state," said Joe Roman, CEO and President of GCP. "It is clear that the debate on gaming will happen in Ohio, and there will likely be a proposal before the voters within the next year. We don't want Ohioans to be forced to choose between two bad options when, by following our guiding principles, it is possible to institute gaming regulations that benefit both Ohio and its residents. By bringing a rational set of principles to the inevitable discussion, we have the potential to help ensure that gaming revenues generated by the state are used to advance economic development in areas such as higher education, business development and tourism."

The studies used by the GCP Board of Directors represent the most comprehensive analysis of the gaming issue undertaken in more than a decade. They were conducted by researchers at Strategic Partner Management Consulting and the Maxine Levin Goodman College of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University and are available at [www.ohiogaminginfo.org](http://www.ohiogaminginfo.org).

*The Greater Cleveland Partnership, the primary voice for businesses in Greater Cleveland, seeks to create jobs and wealth, and improve the economic vitality of the region. Its priorities include technology, innovation and high-growth businesses; connected physical development; education and workforce development; and business attraction, retention and expansion. The GCP emphasizes service to its more than 16,400 members; advocacy on behalf of members and the region; diversity and inclusion; and internationalization of the region and its businesses. <http://www.gcpartnership.com>*