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Yes on 5 Ads Highlight Strength of Indian Support for Proposition 5

Santa Rosa, CA -- The YES on 5 Coalition recently released two television spots that respond to the Nevada casinos' latest misleading ad against Proposition 5 and uses a few Indians from the Pala Tribe to try to give the impression that Indians don't support Prop. 5, the Indian Self-Reliance Initiative.

The new Yes on 5 ads explain that Proposition 5 is supported by the vast majority of California Indians, including 85 Tribes representing more than 96% of the Indians on reservations in California.

"The Palas, backed by huge financial contributions from Nevada casinos, recently cut a special deal that would allow them to have a casino, but force other California Tribes to shut down their existing video gaming machines," said Ken Ramirez, Chairman of the Yes on 5 Coalition. "So, it's no surprise that the Nevada casinos are now using some Pala Indians in their deceptive campaign against Prop. 5. It's because of the shameful deal the Palas made that Proposition 5 is needed and supported by other Tribes throughout the state. The Pala-Nevada deal would essentially force the shutdown of the existing video gaming machines that provide about 80 percent of revenues for most Indian casinos. Proposition 5 will allow us to keep the gaming we now have on our own Tribal land."

Local Assemblywoman Virginia Strom-Martin has witnessed first-hand the economic resurgence on many of the reservations in her district and believes that the rights, lands, and privileges of Native Americans have been usurped by the federal and state governments for too long.

"I have visited the schools and the medical clinics which have been funded by this new source of revenue," said Strom-Martin. "I find it extremely disturbing to know that the Governor of California has sided with out-of-state interests to limit the type of gaming allowed on Indian land." Having witnessed

firsthand the life-changing benefits gaming has brought to the many reservations located in her own local district, Strom-Martin, who is currently seeking re-election to the State Assembly in the 1st District, has fully endorsed Proposition 5.

The ads these out-of-state interests--the Nevada casinos--are running using the Pala Tribe are also deceptive for several other reasons.

“For example, it makes the false claim that Prop. 5 does not provide for ‘shared regulation,” said Ramirez. “In fact, under the provisions of Proposition 5, Indian gaming at Indian casinos will be regulated by federal agencies, Indian Tribal governments, and the state government. And, like all of the ads the Nevada casinos are running against Prop. 5, the Pala ad never states that the ad was actually funded by Nevada casinos. In fact, as documented in official political spending reports filed with the California Secretary of State’s Office, 97% of the money for the campaign against Prop. 5 comes from Nevada casinos who want to kill competition from California Indians.”

A recent Associated Press “AdWatch” article on the Nevada casinos’ Pala ad also concluded that, “The opening of the commercial, in fact, is somewhat deceptive because it almost sounds like a ‘Yes on 5’ commercial.”

The new YES on 5 ads, which were released September 21st, respond to the Nevada casinos’ Pala ad and both feature Mark Macarro, Chairman of the Pechanga Band of Luiseno Mission Indians. In these ads, Macarro explains that Proposition 5 is supported by 85 Tribes representing more than 96% of the Indians on reservations in California.

In the spot entitled “Indians Support 5,” Macarro delineates that “Proposition 5 allows Indians to keep the gaming we have on our own land, so we can reduce Welfare and fund education, housing and health care for gaming and non-gaming Tribes.”

In the spot entitled “Indians Against Indians,” Macarro says: “In the past, when big, special interests wanted to take away what Indians had, they sometimes hired Indians who were willing to fight against their own people. Now, the big Nevada casinos have recruited one Tribe to be in ads against Proposition 5. The rest of California’s Tribes regret that one Tribe chose to cut a deal with the Nevada casinos.”

Proposition 5, the Indian Self-Reliance Initiative, will allow California Indian Tribes to continue to have video gaming machines and other types of gaming currently found on reservations, and it continues to restrict Indian casinos to federally-designated Tribal land. The initiative will create new revenue sharing

programs that will dedicate part of the revenues from Indian gaming to help non-gaming Tribes, part to support local programs in communities near Indian casinos, and part to support emergency medical services throughout California. It also gives the state government a new role in regulating Indian gaming in addition to existing regulation by federal agencies, and it requires gaming Tribes to reimburse the state for all newly-established regulatory costs.

Tribal leaders warn that if Proposition 5 is defeated, thus allowing the government to force the shutdown of the Indians' existing video gaming machines, it would be economically devastating for many Tribes throughout the state and would destroy the progress they have made in reducing Welfare dependency and achieving economic self-reliance.

For these reasons, local Democratic candidate for State Senate Wes Chesbro (2nd District) is also endorsing Proposition 5. "As a strong supporter of Indian sovereignty rights, I am happy to endorse Proposition 5," said Chesbro. "I have observed first-hand the improvement of living conditions on rancherias and reservations throughout Northern California that have resulted from Indian gaming." His opponent, Republican Senatorial candidate John Jordan, has also publicly endorsed Proposition 5.

The YES on 5 Coalition includes 85 California Indian Tribes (representing more than 96% of the Indians on reservations statewide), and more than 200,000 Californians, including law enforcement officials, labor, business, religious, environmental, and civic leaders and organizations throughout the state.

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