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## **The Capital Times :: EDITORIAL :: 8A**

**Saturday, February 28, 2004**

Mayor Dave Cieslewicz continues to take hits from individuals and groups who are embittered about the overwhelming defeat of the proposal to turn the DeJope bingo hall into a casino. But the continued carping harms the credibility of the critics more than it does the mayor.

Cieslewicz opposed the referendum that would have permitted the conversion, and in so doing he angered backers of the proposal, many of whom had a financial interest in the project. The latest gripes come from some of the area's most well regarded and able local union leaders.

Scott Vaughn, the executive director of the Building and Construction Trades Council of South Central Wisconsin, said of the mayor's stance, "We were really disappointed with this attitude toward labor." Mark Herrmann, business representative of Teamsters Local 695, said Cieslewicz's decision to oppose a referendum on an agreement that he had helped negotiate sent a bad message. "It's almost like the mayor was saying he was in favor of the money, but not the jobs," argued Herrmann.

Vaughn, Herrmann and other critics of the mayor have a right to their views. And their criticisms ought to be considered seriously, as they are important players in the economic life of this community.

But the mayor's critics might want to take another look at the vote totals from the Feb. 17 referendum vote.

Despite the fact that supporters of the casino outspent opponents by a margin of at least 20-1, despite the fact that Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk and many of the most respected groups in the community -- including the South Central Federation of Labor and unions such as AFSCME -- called for a "yes" vote, Dane County voters rejected the casino proposal by a 2-1 margin.

Considering the overwhelming vote to reject the casino, and looking at voting patterns around the county, it's clear that a significant number of union households voted against the casino proposal. Certainly, some of the most articulate and effective critics of the plan were veteran union activists.

This is important because, while Mayor Cieslewicz is popular, he did not defeat the referendum on his own. In opposing the casino proposal, Cieslewicz tapped into a popular sentiment in the county -- a view that a

prosperous region does not need to rely on a casino project and the revenues from it to maintain its economic viability.

Instead of attacking the mayor, labor leaders might want to pay attention to the sentiments expressed by the vast majority of Dane County voters, and by many members of unions in the county. They might also want to note that, on the vast majority of economic issues facing this community, Cieslewicz agrees with them.

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