

The citizens of Petersburg and the Executive committee of the Petersburg NAACP want you to vote “No” on SB203/HB1134. Sponsored by Senator Morrissey and Delegate Taylor.

Offering the promise of jobs and economic growth is a farce. Petersburg is a poor, underappreciated, undervalued, underestimated, underrepresented city, that organizations and individuals with power, influence and resources think they can do with as they will. We ask you to vote “No” on the changes to 58.1-4107 and 58.1-4123 of the Code of Virginia to allow Petersburg to continue the slow but healthy development process that will bring Petersburg back into the city we can be proud of. We want to “grow our city responsibly, not gamble on our city, hoping it works out.”

The spirit of 58.1-4107 and 58.1-4123 of the Code of Virginia is not being followed with the proposed change in paragraph six. The intent was to ensure municipalities were large and healthy enough to absorb the failure of a casino. Petersburg’s population is less than 34,000.

Paragraph six specifically targets and profiles the City of Petersburg in the same way, the casino industry finds its ideal target demographic for revenue extraction. Studies show that casinos targets those who can least afford to lose and earn most of its living from people for whom gambling has become an addiction.

For the past several years, the City of Petersburg has ranked last of the 133 municipalities in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The reasons for the last placed ranking are also why Petersburg is attractive to casino owners.

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Petersburg</b>	<b>Virginia</b>	<b>United States</b>
Premature death	19,400	6,400	5,400
Sexually transmitted infections	1,729.1	507.3	161.2
Teen births	71	16	12
Median household income	\$40,200	\$76,500	\$72,900
Children eligible for free or reduced-price lunch	99%	44%	32%
Home ownership	39%	66%	81%
Severe housing cost burden	26%	13%	7%
Violent crime	714	207	63
Insufficient sleep	47%	39%	32%
Math Test Scores (% Proficient)	53%	82%	
Reading/Language Arts Test Scores (% Proficient)	52%	78%	

Are we content to allow the development of a casino in Petersburg that consciously exploits the predictable weakness of the most vulnerable people? Petersburg meets the target demographic criteria. We ask that you vote “No.”

Casino pay is being stated as \$55,000 a year. That sounds good, but it is actually including the employers share of FICA, Federal unemployment tax, state unemployment tax, worker’s compensation and the benefits package, (which normally includes Health insurance, dental, life insurance, long-term disability, 401k). The true take home pay will be less than \$30,000.00 a year. This is a deliberate manipulation to make the sell. That will not lift people out of poverty.

What Petersburg needs is healthy development, with the “Incremental Development” methodology. We need to “build our city, not gamble on our city.” Petersburg is slowly, but deliberately improving, but we fully recognize a quick fix cannot solve problems that were 30 years in the making.

Please vote “No.”