

# The Boston Globe

## Move Over Wiseguys

Sept. 24, 2007

By Kevin Cullen

Jerry Angiulo, the old Mafioso, got out of the can a couple of weeks ago. And not a moment too soon, because we need an official state casino greeter.

Considering how various government agencies spent so much time, money, and effort to put La Cosa Nostra out of business, only for said government to take over the rackets from the wiseguys in the name of "revenue enhancement," hiring Jerry to say hello to the suckers entering Foxwoods-on-the-Charles or whatever they call whatever casino gets built is the least we can do.

After spending 24 years in The Big House for presiding over a gambling empire that has been appropriated by the state, it seems only fitting that Jerry would become the public face of The House, otherwise known as the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Now that Governor Deval Patrick (D-Harrah's) has given casino gambling the big thumbs up, all we've got to do now is beat the Mashpee Wampanoags to the blackjack table by getting some other developer to build a casino before the tribe does.

Seeing how the feds just conveniently launched a corruption probe of the Wampanoags' plans, it looks like it's time to start hiring and training people to work at a state-approved joint. (Note to casino staff: Under no circumstances is W. Belichick allowed to bring video equipment onto the premises.)

So, the other day, I'm sitting in the State House office of the guy most determined to beat the Wampanoags to the roulette wheel: Timothy P. Cahill, the biggest bookie in the state, aka the treasurer and receiver general of Massachusetts.

Cahill, not a bad guy, presides over the lottery and was originally against casino gambling. But he changed his mind after he saw all that money leeching out to the two casinos in Connecticut, and after he noticed that lottery revenues had gone flat. That is a nice way of saying we have bled the Megabucks and scratch ticket junkies dry, so it's time to try something else. "We need the money," said Cahill, who in speaking those four words accomplished something rare on Beacon Hill: He told the truth.

But just because something is true doesn't mean it's a good idea. And the "everybody else is doing it" argument cuts little water here. With that kind of reasoning, I should like NASCAR, and that ain't happenin', pal.

Here in Megachusetts, we have, by Cahill's count, a lottery agent for every 750 residents. And still we want more people to gamble more money at casinos?

"It's like Prohibition," Cahill said. "We can't stop it, so let's control it."

If this is merely about being realistic and pragmatic, because people are going to gamble anyway, then why don't we legalize prostitution and tax it? Doing so would probably reduce sexually transmitted diseases. If the state can be a bookie, why not a pimp?

"I'm not going to argue for legalizing prostitution or drugs," Cahill said.

What about sports gambling? It's about the only thing the wiseguys have left. Why not legalize that? And aren't we being culturally insensitive to our Asian citizens by not legalizing mahjong? After all, I can bring you to a half-dozen joints in Chinatown right now where they're gambling like, well, like mahjong players. You can't stop people from playing mahjong, so let's legalize it and tax it.

As the guy who will divvy up all the dough the state stands to gain, Cahill acknowledges we are standing on a slippery slope. "This is a tough issue," he said. "We need leadership on it. If you're looking at the lesser of two evils, a limited number of casinos is better than adding another 1,000 lottery agents."

Which, of course, presumes we need one or the other, instead of neither.

As treasurer, Cahill is statutorily prohibited from buying lottery tickets, and won't be able to gamble at whatever casino is inevitably built. But that's OK with him.

"I don't gamble," Cahill said. "I never have."

As Mr. Angiulo would say, badda bing.

*Kevin Cullen is a Globe columnist. He can be reached at [cullen@globe.com](mailto:cullen@globe.com).*