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## Schools and gaming don't mix — My Turn

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Games like football, soccer and chess are hallmarks of the high school experience. Unfortunately, at Kellis High School in Glendale, the talk on campus is increasingly centered on games like blackjack, keno and slot machines.

Five years ago, tribal leaders of the Tohono O'odham Nation shocked Glendale's community leaders when they announced plans to site a \$400 million casino and resort directly across the street from Kellis High School.

The revelation came as a troubling surprise to the state and our local communities. In 2002, Arizona voters approved a major gaming compact that limited construction of new casinos in the greater Phoenix area. Preventing new casino construction near schools and houses of worship was a specific goal of the 2002 gaming compact. The Tohono O'odham Nation understood this, campaigned on behalf of the compact, and promised to respect its prohibition on new casinos near Phoenix.

As a member of the Arizona Board of Education, I'm especially frustrated by the tribe's secrecy regarding its casino plan. The Peoria Unified School District opened Kellis High School in 2004 to relieve Peoria High School's urgent overcrowding issues. The location for the school was determined by an open process that allowed ample opportunity for community input. The Tohono O'odham Nation purchased the land for the casino in advance of the school site selection and had full knowledge that this conflict would emerge. Unfortunately, they they chose to keep quiet and did nothing to inform the public or the school district about their plans.

That's why many members of the local community oppose this casino. We don't want a casino in our neighborhood.

If tribal leaders get their way, a Vegas-style 24/7 casino will be opened right across the street from Kellis High School. The proposed casino has applied for a liquor license with the Arizona Department of Liquor Licenses and Control. If granted, liquor service will be allowed at the casino every day of the year.

Glendale-area teachers and parents work hard to instill knowledge and values in local students to help them stay on a path towards success. The members of this community shouldn't have to endure the added difficulties that will be created by the proposed casino.

Fortunately, there's still hope for our local neighborhoods. In Washington, Sen. John McCain, Sen. Jeff Flake and Rep. Trent Franks are seeking passage of the Keep The Promise Act of 2015, which would explicitly prohibit new casinos in Maricopa County.

Our representatives in Washington are working hard to stop the proposed casino in its tracks, because they understand that students and gaming just don't mix. Their colleagues in Congress need to follow suit, step up and take a stand for Arizona's public school students.

Arizona voters never intended to approve the construction of large Vegas-style casinos near neighborhood schools, and, according to The Arizona Republic, the Tohono O'odham Nation has engaged in "subterfuge and deceit" to support its casino scheme.

Congress should act swiftly to set an example for Arizona's students by protecting the Kellis High School community. Like many classroom lessons, it's a simple matter of right and wrong.