



Fresno Bee Letters to Editor

TUESDAY,
MAY 6, 2008

Part of the Problem

By Kirk Atamian
Chairman, Board of Directors
Madera District Chamber of Commerce

Re Madera casino: Good for Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger! He cut through the disingenuous objections of the project's opponents and signed an agreement with the North Fork Rancheria to bring us some long-lasting economic relief.

We don't need Sen. Dean Florez from Kern County dictating our future. Last year, he voted in favor of compacts allowing more than 5,000 slot machines per casino in urban areas of Southern California for wealthy tribes who happen to be his campaign contributors.

And we don't need Fresno County officials coming to Madera County telling us how to do our business. We Maderans are quite capable of making our own decisions without the paternalistic meddling of our neighbors to the south.

And we don't need these outside whiners complaining about having been "steamrolled" and "left out of the process." Where were these people over the past four years as Madera County and the North Fork Rancheria slowly, carefully and transparently worked together to put the best possible project together for the entire region?

Madera County welcomes genuine assistance and care to address our region's economic problems but, as the saying goes, if you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem.

THURSDAY,
MAY 8, 2008

Madera County needs and wants another casino project

**By Gary Gilbert, former County
Supervisor**

The recent Fresno Bee editorial regarding the Governor and the North Fork Mono Tribe entering into a compact was distorted. Governor Schwarzenegger and the North Fork Rancheria are to be congratulated for reaching an agreement to build a casino resort in Madera County.

The project will bring over 750 construction jobs, 1,500 permanent jobs, and over 2,000 spin-off jobs. These jobs are critical to our county that has recently seen unemployment grow by 25% compared to this time last year and unemployment rates return to double-digit levels.

These new, diversified, and environmentally-clean jobs will provide relief to our county and region suffering a combined economic, housing, and budget crisis and will lift one of the largest tribes in California (1,700 members) out of poverty.

The North Fork Tribe has played by all the rules. I know because I sat on the Public Lands Committee for National Association of Counties and the Indian Gaming Committee of the California Association of Counties and negotiated the County's legally enforceable agreement with the Tribe. This agreement will pump millions of dollars in to the local economy.

People in Madera County want and desperately need economic diversity, living wage jobs and an opportunity to prosper.