



## Massachusetts gaming chair Stephen Crosby defends participation in Las Vegas panel, trip to Asia

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By

BOSTON -- The chairman of the **Massachusetts Gaming Commission** is defending his decision to sit on a panel next week with a **casino** executive from Ohio as part of a trip to Las Vegas with two other fellow gaming commissioners.

Chairman **Stephen P. Crosby** will be on a panel with Daniel Reinhard, a vice president for **Rock Ventures**, which owns a casino in Cleveland but is not attempting to open a casino in Massachusetts. The panel, called **Emerging Jurisdictions Case Study: Massachusetts and Ohio**, will be moderated by Lynne Levin Kaufman, a partner with **Cooper Levenson**, an Atlantic City, N. J. law firm with casinos as clients.

Crosby and commissioners **Enrique Zuniga** and **Gayle Cameron** are attending the American Gaming Association's **Global Gaming Expo** at the Sands Expo & Convention Center in Las Vegas, being held from Oct. 1-4.

Two anti-casino activists -- Celeste Myers, co-chair of "**No Eastie Casino**," which is opposed to the proposed casino at Suffolk Downs in Boston, and Emy Shepherd of Monson, a member of **Quabog Valley Against Casinos** -- said Crosby is creating an appearance that he is too close to the casino industry. The **gaming commission** is charged with licensing, regulating and overseeing casinos in Massachusetts.

Shepherd said Crosby's participation on the panel appears a little too cozy. "It gives the impression of impropriety," she said. "It may be perfectly above board, but there is just that impression that something else is going on."

Crosby on Wednesday said it is "totally appropriate" to question his decision to be on the panel but he said there is



File photo | Associated Press

In this Dec. 13, 2011 file photo, Stephen Crosby during a news conference at the State House following his appointment by Gov. Patrick as chair of the state gaming commission. Crosby has come under fire recently for plans to take part in a Las Vegas panel discussion.

nothing about it that smacks of a conflict or an appearance of a conflict. "The people are not involved in Massachusetts," Crosby said. "In this situation, it's squeaky clean."

In January, Crosby faced criticism for agreeing to sit on a panel with Troy Stremming, a senior vice president of **Ameristar Casinos**, which is proposing a casino in Springfield, and Stephen P. Tocco, a registered lobbyist and the president of ML Strategies, at a forum in Boston on what the casino industry will mean to Massachusetts. Crosby ultimately decided to speak separately at the forum to avoid the appearance of a conflict.

Crosby said he did not want to be on a panel with someone who might be doing business in Massachusetts.

At the time, Crosby said, he obtained an opinion from the state Ethics Commission, which said he could take part in the Boston panel, because he would not be paid and the event would be open to the public. Crosby said he is not being paid to participate in the Las Vegas conference.

Crosby, who was the founding Dean of the John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies at the University of Massachusetts at Boston before being appointed commission chairman, said it is impossible to learn the gaming business without coming into contact with people in the business. "I don't think there is any hint of a conflict in this situation," Crosby said.



The Republican file photo by Michael S. Gordon

Members of the Massachusetts Gaming Commission in August held an educational forum at Western New England University in Springfield. From left: Commissioners Bruce Stebbins, Enrique Zuniga, Stephen Crosby, chairman, James F. McHugh and Gayle Cameron.

Crosby this month criticized the city of Springfield for **a possible conflict** in the hiring of its casino consultant. Crosby questioned the city's judgment in retaining the Chicago law firm of Shefsky & Froelich, a registered lobbyist in Illinois for Penn National Gaming and MGM Resorts, two of the companies seeking a casino license in the city.

Crosby said Tuesday that the dispute with Springfield is over after the state Ethics Commission ruled last week there was no conflict of interest. The ethics commission said the consultant complied with state law by disclosing an appearance of a conflict

Springfield City Solicitor **Edward M. Pikula** said it was none of his business when asked about Crosby's participation on the panel at the Las Vegas conference. Pikula did say that no one from the city is going to Las Vegas.

Later next month, Crosby and Cameron will be attending a conference of the International **Association of Gaming Regulators** in Singapore. On the way back from Singapore, he said, he will go to Macau for a day and Cameron will be in Macau for two days. Macau, a special administrative region of China, has seen a casino boom in recent years.

Paul E. Burns, a member of the **Palmer Town Council** and longtime supporter of a casino in Palmer, questioned the benefits of a trip to Asia. Burns said there are enough examples in this country about mistakes and lessons learned in the casino industry.

"How is the Singapore trip open, transparent and participatory?" Burns said, referring to aspects of the gaming commission's mission statement.

Crosby said it is important to meet other regulators in person, develop trust and learn from their experiences. Crosby said Burns is dead wrong. "We need to know the people who have done the licensing elsewhere," he said. "Singapore has a really pristine process. They really buttoned up the Asian gaming companies. And we want to know those people."

"This is our work," he said. "Every industry goes to the right trade association meetings. And it happens that our trade association is about gaming. I think anybody would think this is a legitimate thing for us to be doing particularly now when we are just learning this industry and learning how to regulate the industry properly."

Ahead of the Global Gaming conference, the three commissioners plan to attend the annual conference for the **National Center for Responsible Gaming** on Sunday at the same location in Las Vegas.

The travel budget for the Las Vegas trip is about \$10,000, according to Elaine Driscoll, communications director for the commission. She said those are not tax dollars since the commission is operating on startup money that will be reimbursed by gambling companies through gaming license fees and revenues.

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