Proposition 1A benefits tribes and local economy

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Indian casinos have been in a tenuous position the last few years, many of them on the verge of seeing federal agents close them down because of the machines they use.

An attempt was made to rectify the situation in 1998 with one initiative -- Proposition 5 -- which was approved by voters in the state. But when that didn’t hold up to the scrutiny of the courts, Proposition 1A was drafted.

Proposition 1A would amend the California Constitution to allow slot machines, lottery games and banked percentage card games on tribal land if the tribe has reached an agreement with the governor for a compact.

Late last year, 57 tribes signed compacts. Proposition 1A would put those compacts into effect. Those compacts would allow tribes to have between 350 and 2,000 machines and provide for payments to tribes that don’t operate machines. It is estimated that gaming provides 50,000 jobs and generates $120 million a year in tax revenue.

Opponents of Proposition 1A say this initiative would create an irresistible pull to people who have gambling problems. But problem gamblers don’t need casinos to lure them to wager. They would gamble on cockroaches scurrying across a kitchen floor if someone would take the bet.

To us, Proposition 1A is a matter of economics. With the passage of Proposition 1A, the Coachella Valley could emerge as home to the largest concentration of slot machines in California. And with expansion of current casinos, analysts say California’s Indian gaming industry could eventually become second only to Nevada, growing from a $1 billion industry to $4.7 billion in just a few years.

In the Coachella Valley, tribes who built thriving temporary casinos under tents and half-finished buildings could make a permanent foray into gaming -- increasing their number of slot machines and card tables while diversifying their holdings to include entertainment and destination resorts.

But tribal officials say their casinos can’t get much bigger -- some facilities have almost reached their 2,000-per-tribe limit for video machines. But they could expand their offerings to include more entertainment, restaurants and resort amenities. That is a natural fit with our current tourism economy, offering visitors and residents more options for dining, dancing and entertainment.
Currently, Californians are spending a lot of time and money traveling to Nevada destinations to gamble and play. It is estimated that about 35 percent of gaming revenues in Nevada casinos comes out of the pockets of Californians.

Now, we don’t expect that Proposition 1A will keep all of that gaming revenue in the state, but it will keep some of it closer to home.

Proposition 1A makes economic sense for the Coachella Valley and for California. We urge you to vote yes on Proposition 1A.

**Vote no on Prop. 29**

**Referendum is bad legislation for all**

Speaking of Indian gaming, there is another initiative on Tuesday’s ballot that deals with Indian gaming compacts: Proposition 29.

Unfortunately, supporters of Indian gaming may be tempted to vote for this referendum, which would be a mistake.

This measure is not good for anyone. It’s a step backward and bad legislation. We urge you to vote no on Proposition 29.