

Failed Casino Operator Supports Anti-Indian Gaming Initiative

■ Salty's, Red Robin figure uses offensive images to support Washington's I-892.

By Ron Karten

Washington State Initiative 892 "would authorize licensed gambling establishments... to operate electronic scratch ticket machines of the same type, and in the same total number, as authorized in state — Tribal gaming compacts."

Initiated by Washington tax activist Tim Eyman, who is paying himself \$3,100 a week from campaign contributions, according to the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, the campaign is a virtual *Who's Who* of self-interested rogues in the Evergreen State.

Take the campaign coming out of the office of Gerry Kingen, Seattle restaurateur and

failed casino operator. His mailer in support of the initiative features six cartoons drawn by Idaho cartoonist Larry Knighton depicting stereotypes of Indians carting off the loot from casinos.

"Use these cartoons if you have the courage to do so," the campaign piece says.

Although Kingen did not return calls for comment, cartoonist Larry Knighton said, "The cartoons are talking about the issues. The drawings are addressing the issues that are right in front of your face with words and imagery.

They are not addressing anything in regards to (Indian) intelligence. They're not poking fun at any (Indian) cultural lifestyles. It's only the issues. If they're offended by touching and talking about the issues, then I'm sorry, too bad."

"Governor Gary Locke has criticized the measure and does not support it. He has expressed concerns that Initiative 892 would create wide-open gambling and he does not believe that the people of Washington want to become another Ne-

vada or Las Vegas. The governor finds these images stereotypical and offensive," said Sharon Wallace, Communications Director for the Washington Governor.

The thrust of the initiative piece is that "The Tribes own the Democrats," who are "selectively supporting our state's constitution."

If fairness is at issue — and

Kingen properties, the Salty's restaurant chain, at that time owed "more than \$330,000 in outstanding state taxes and fees. In addition, public records show more than \$320,000 in current (2001) liens against the various restaurant properties, filed by state agencies and the Internal Revenue Service."

Also at that time, the article said,

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~Sharon Wallace,
Communications Director For The Washington Governor

Kingen's piece says, "It's time to level the gaming field" — Kingen's record is instructive.

When Funsters Grand Casinos, Inc. at the SeaTac Airport went bust in 2002 after operating for a little more than a year, the company in which he was part-owner left

behind a trail of debts ultimately amounting to more than \$2 million, according to the *Seattle daily*. The company ran out on some 200 creditors including 160 employees, many of whom lost a whole month's pay, according to the *Puget Sound Business Journal*.

Before heading for the high road on his casino debts, Kingen faced a complaint from the Washington State Gambling Commission, according to the *Business Journal*, "alleging that Funsters was behind on its gambling taxes, and that it didn't have enough money on hand to pay its advertised progressive jackpots or to pay winners for their chips."

Also according to a 2001 *Business Journal* article, another group of

"Wells Fargo Bank also is suing the Kingens and their Salty's management company, Happy Guests International Inc., seeking the \$551,000 outstanding balance on (an overdue) revolving loan...."

The end of the Kingen initiative piece said, "This same group of politicians also chooses to ignore our nation's Constitution which clearly illiterates [sic] on the importance of "Liberty and justice for all."

The U.S. Constitution does not actually 'illiterate' anything, but the mistake indicates more than careless writing. It also demonstrates the sloppy use of documents and the selective use of information blighting the political landscape today.

In the first place, "liberty and justice," does not come from the U.S. Constitution, or the state of Washington Constitution for that matter, but from the Pledge of Allegiance. In the second place, the issue does not hang on the question of equal treatment among groups but on the sovereign status of Indians.

Indians have casinos because

they are sovereign and decide for themselves the shape of their nations. Indians are, of course, Americans, and fall under the federal umbrella of laws, but at the state level, they are equal partners in the gambling compacts that have come to mark one of the most remarkable resurgences in American history.

And with the casino money earned, the Tribes' record of contributions to non-Indian communities around them far exceeds any community gifts made by Kingen or the many other mainstream beneficiaries of the forms of gambling that they are so far allowed.

Other practices illuminating the character of supporters of the campaign for I-892 have surfaced. The *Seattle daily* reported this year that the campaign received 10 contributions of \$2,500 each from 10 minicaseo corporations, "all with the same address...and most or all of which are principally owned by either or both of two brothers, Tim and Michael Iszely.

"According to the state Department of Revenue's most recent list of delinquent taxpayers, dated April 1 (2004), five of those Iszely-affiliated companies contributed money to the initiative campaign even though they owed the state \$846,314 in back taxes."

For those in Washington interested in keeping the likes of Kingen and the

Iszely brothers in their place, a 'no' vote on I-892 will be a start. Those from across the Northwest who would vote with their pocketbooks might not only want to avoid eating at Salty's, but also at the Red Robin restaurants where Kingen was founder and as recently as 1996, CEO. ■



Tribe Puts Winter Weather Emergency Plan In Place

By Ron Karten

Last winter, we saw snow and lots of it. Fine for the kids, but Elders wondered not only about how they would get out of their homes and down their driveways, but what about their medical and pharmacy needs?

As a result, Public Works Director John Mercier has drafted an internal Public Works Department policy describing roads that will get cleared of snow first and how department employees will be expected to respond to adverse weather conditions in Grand Ronde.

"We will assess the weather as we always do," said Mercier, "first whether people should come in to work at all. From that point, we have designated a Public Works team who will be called out to move snow or any other obstructions (ice is a little more difficult). The first priority will be the entrance road and the clinic road," he said.

At the pharmacy, Pharmacist Julie Davis said that she will remain on call with her cell phone in times when she can't make it to the clinic.

"If I can get down from my house, I'll come in and get anything," she said.

In the works is a project with the Information Systems Department so that in emergencies, when she can't get to the clinic to fill prescriptions, she'll be able to access pharmacy records from her home, and call them in to other local pharmacies.

Depending on the severity of the weather, the question remains open whether Elders or others will be able to make it to another local pharmacy. The Health Clinic Director Michael Watkins lives right down the block, which made it so much more convenient and, in a way, neighborly during last year's storm.

"We came in and dealt with it," he said. "We'll probably do the same thing

this year. It's based on where the snow hits and what staff can make it in," he said. "Last year, I did some home deliveries myself because I live down the street."

While noting that "winters are generally mild in Grand Ronde," John Mercier said that "personal responsibility is also required" in times of emergency.

"Public Works can do the housing streets," he continued, "but we can't do housing (sidewalks and driveways). We're working with the Housing Authority to take care of these needs."

And Housing is ready again this year to keep all the walkways de-iced; and the snow shoveled from sidewalks and driveways, according to Housing Authority Assistant Director Greg Martin.

"We've done that for a number of years," he said. "Should we have a snowstorm, we're prepared to remove the snow in coordination with the Tribe; also we have standby snow removal

equipment for the driveways and sidewalks.

"We'll clear all of the parking lots, the normal walkways, the sidewalks," said Martin.

The Housing Authority also is coordinating with the Security personnel to be first on the phone list when emergency weather conditions are expected or in process.

"This year," said Martin, "we've got greater coordination with the Tribe and John Mercier's office. We've done more advance planning for anticipated bad weather."

For employees, the message during a weather emergency is, "Don't risk your personal safety, but keep your supervisor informed," said Mercier.

"Precipitation (for this winter) is likely to be above average in the Pacific Northwest," according to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. ■