

## INSIDE MAINE



ESSENTIAL  
OBSERVATIONS  
*Karl Trautman*

# Maine's winning hand: purity

**L**ike many people, I was surprised that voters rejected the proposal for a Washington County racetrack/casino on Nov. 6. I thought a majority would support the expansion of legalized gambling because the initiative was targeted to help Maine's poorest county. Why not let Washington County try to jumpstart its economy? After all, fairness is a vital part of Maine's political culture.

What I didn't take into consideration was the power of another, perhaps even stronger, component of our political culture: purity. Maine likes to think of itself as pure. And gambling is certainly not pure.

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*Expanding gambling would accelerate the weakening of our state's core. Instead of being self-reliant, hard-working and independent, we could become dependent, lazy and needy.*

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What do I mean by pure? I went to dictionary.com and found 18 different meanings. What is amazing is how many of them seem to apply to our state, or at least its image. For example, one definition is "free from anything of a different, inferior, or contaminating kind; free from extraneous matter."

Is this how we view our state? How would expanding gambling contaminate us?

Expanding gambling would accelerate the weakening of our state's core. Instead of being self-reliant, hard-working and independent, we could become dependent, lazy and needy. (More like the rest of the nation.) Additionally, more of us might buy into the false notion that we can get ahead through luck and chance. In real life, the path to success is often long, uneventful and even sometimes boring.

Moreover, gambling is not essential for most people; it only distracts from the most important things in life. It is far inferior to saving and giving.

Do these arguments sound hypocritical? The state already has a lottery. All you have to do is go to the homepage of the Maine state lottery — [www.mainelottery.com](http://www.mainelottery.com) — and you can see Augusta is impure. You can watch live drawings for Powerball and even get information on how to become a lottery agent. In fiscal year 2006, more than \$50 million from the state lottery was allocated to the state's general fund.

Another definition of pure is "free from foreign or inappropriate elements." This is

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