

# Mass Gaming Commission

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Narrative of Eastern States Exposition CEO Eugene J. Cassidy to MGC at ILEV (Impacted Live Entertainment Venue) hearing, 28 January 2014

Good morning Commissioners and Ladies and Gentlemen.

My name is Gene Cassidy; I am the President & CEO of Eastern States Exposition. I am here today to personally tell you as much as I can in a short time about Eastern States Exposition; its long history; the one-of-a-kind, irreplaceable agricultural and educational programming it offers; the critical role it plays in the Western Massachusetts economy and to personally ask you to help protect it from one of the most daunting challenges it has ever faced...the development and operation of an \$800 million casino in downtown Springfield...less than 2 miles away from the location of the Exposition grounds in West Springfield.

Eastern States Exposition, commonly known by our agricultural fair's trade-name, The Big E has continuously operated for more than 97 years. ESE is the largest cultural event that occurs on the Eastern Seaboard. With year around visitation that exceeds 2.5 million people.

We are the fifth largest fair in all of North America, hosting nearly 1.5 million people at our agricultural event annually.

Ranked by size we fall behind only the Texas State Fair, The Houston Livestock Show, the San Antonio Livestock Show and

the Minnesota State Fair. All of whom receive tax payer funded subsidies for infrastructure and operations from their respective state governments. ESE receives no such financial assistance.

According to Regional Economic Models Inc., an economic modeling firm that creates models for Fortune 100 companies as well as worldwide governments and universities, a firm located here in Massachusetts: ESE generates an economic impact on the Greater Springfield Region that is nearly ½ Billion dollars.

➤ I'll repeat- That's one half of a billion dollars.

We create:

- 3000 jobs in Hampden County
- \$92 million in personal income in the County

Furthermore REMI calculates that ESE generates:

- \$3 million in income tax revenues to the Commonwealth
- \$1.4 million in sales tax revenues to the Commonwealth
- \$430,000 in hotel taxes
- \$3.3 million in food and beverage tax revenues

Additionally, the impact of ESE reaches well beyond Greater Springfield and accounts for an *additional* 2000 jobs and \$134 million in personal income throughout New England.

Eastern States Exposition at nearly 100 years old has been overlooked by legislators and regulators for far too long. I implore you today, to address the concerns we present, to ask questions of me and ultimately to set the stage to prepare necessary protections for this quiet organization, an organization that has provided unique and irreplaceable agricultural and educational programming and enormous horsepower to the Greater Springfield Economy since its founding by our visionary patriarch Joshua Loring Brooks, and his contemporaries, including Horace Moses, James and Helen Storrow, and J. C. Penny and others.

### **More than a "Fair"**

In addition to the portfolio of economic benefits of a healthy Eastern States Exposition, we have fulfilled a mission that supports the agriculture communities of New England and beyond. We host Future Farmers of America and 4H youth from across the country. ESE is the only fair in America that has FFA participation from as many as 18 states.

We produce some of the most important and renowned equine, bovine and swine shows in the country.

Including one of the oldest horse shows in America.

This month we hosted the largest poultry show in the United States.

We host important trade shows, some of which are counted among the largest in the country: Among them, one of the largest machine tool manufacturing shows in North America, certainly the largest east of the Mississippi, takes place biennially at ESE. Other events, though less glamorous, number over 100, including summer country music festivals and Springfield Symphony Summer Pops presentations.

All of these events, though not all specifically mentioned or protected by gaming legislation, are precariously balanced by the success of the fair. Without the fair and its ability to attract large crowds by offering an array of top quality live concerts and comedy performances and other year around scheduled events that provide the economic underpinning for our year around operation, the world of Agriculture, agricultural Best Practices and education and the Regional Economy suffers.

### **More than Agriculture:**

Storrowton Village Museum, founded in 1929 by Mrs. Storrow was the first undertaking of its kind in the United States. The village of 18<sup>th</sup> Century and early 19<sup>th</sup> Century buildings was created at ESE when buildings from throughout New England were disassembled from their original locations and moved piece-by-piece, brick-by-brick, beam-by-beam to the grounds.

Until this time, never before in American history had such an effort been made to preserve American History. While antique buildings had been preserved on their foundations, never had such important buildings been moved to be saved.

Again, although there is no specific mention in any gaming legislation that requires protections for such civic assets, the Exposition's ability to continue to offer and operate such valuable and on- of-a-kind assets will certainly be compromised without the protections afforded under the *impacted live entertainment venue provisions* in the gaming statute.

Our history, beginning with the National Dairy Show in 1916 includes a prominent role in the development of the American Hockey League at our storied Coliseum; featuring the greatest names in American Hockey; Teddy Shore, The Springfield Indians and The Springfield Kings. And at one time the home to the New England (now Hartford) Whalers.

Most importantly, through it all and still, we have featured the biggest names in entertainment: The annual visits of greats from days gone by like Bob Hope, Gene Autry, Johnny Cash, Buddy Hackett, Liberace, Cyd Charise, Arthur Godfrey, and Paul Lynde.

To contemporaries like: Beyonce, Jessica Simpson, Brad Paisley, Reba McEntire, The Beach Boys, Fergie, Miranda Lambert, Def Leppard, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Austin Mahone, D.J. Pauly, Alan

Jackson, Hunter Hayes, Jeff Dunham, Carrie Underwood and on, and on, and on. Including summertime outdoor Country Music Festivals that attract tens of thousands for a day-long event.

In 2013 alone we produced:

- 93 live entertainment performances on large stages
- 51 Live entertainment performances on the Storowton Village small stage
- 51 Circus performances, and
- 51 Shows on the Avenue of States stage

I personally ask the commissioners to assist Eastern States Exposition in our efforts not only to continue to offer top quality live entertainment in Western Massachusetts, but also to continue to be able to offer the other unique and irreplaceable agricultural and educational programming we produce by designating Eastern States Exposition as an *impacted live entertainment venue*.

I am limited by respect for your time and the margins of my capacity as only the 7<sup>th</sup> president in 100 years to lead this august organization know as Eastern States Exposition.

I hope I have done adequate justice to one of the most important and proven entertainment and economic development resources that exist for Greater Springfield, for

Massachusetts, for New England and for agriculture in the entire United States; *The Eastern States Exposition*.

I hope I have gotten your attention, piqued your interest, and cultivated the process necessary to protect ESE from what is evidencing itself to be the most daunting challenge we've ever faced since our founding a century ago.

That this proven name in entertainment and regional economic development; that this 501 (c) 3 self-supporting, non-tax payer supported, public charity has regrettably been forced to appear before you today---its very existence challenged by an entertainment and financial *behemoth* accompanied by a team of lawyers--- That says something; at minimum, it reveals that Eastern States Exposition needs your assistance, your intervention.

Eastern States Exposition supports on a *grand* scale, unique programming as well as and in an important way, the economy of the region, the state, New England and beyond.

We play a role that *deserves*, a role that requires your special attention. The ability of ESE to continue to offer such programming and economic benefit will, without a doubt, be significantly threatened unless the Commission designates it an *impacted live entertainment venue* entitling it to the protections afforded under the Gaming Statute.

In closing I want you to know that I am grateful for your time and I appreciate your thoughtful consideration.

I encourage your questions.