

GUYANA

COUNTY OF DEMERARA

In the matter of the WITHDRAWAL of  
Bill No. 30 of 2006:  
Gambling Prevention (Amendment) Bill 2006

**PETITION**

To: The National Assembly of the  
Cooperative Republic of Guyana  
Public Buildings  
Georgetown

THE HUMBLE PETITION of the Christian Community in Guyana  
against the reading, consideration and passage of the draft legislation for  
Bill No. 30 of 2006: Gambling Prevention (Amendment) Bill 2006  
and its retraction and invalidation/withdrawal.

Viz:

Reverend Raphael Massiah      Georgetown Ministers' Fellowship  
e/o First Assembly of God  
Durban Street, Georgetown

Reverend Alphonso Porter      Guyana Council of Churches  
e/o Queenstown Church of The Nazarene  
Irving Street  
Queenstown, Georgetown

Pastor Lloyd Stewart      Guyana Evangelical Fellowship  
e/o Bethel Gospel Hall  
192-3 Camp Street  
South Cummingsburg

**Respectfully submit:-**

1. That your Petitioners and the organizations they represent are duly registered under the Laws of Guyana.
2. That your Petitioners are desirous of promoting a motion to retract and or otherwise invalidate and annul the provisions of the legislation Bill No. 30 of 2006: Gambling Prevention (Amendment) Act of 2006, scheduled for hearing in the National Assembly of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana firstly on the 11<sup>th</sup> January 2006 and apparently on days thereafter.
3. That the said Bill No. 30 of 2006 is disingenuous, opportunistic, unconstitutional and conflicting with the protection of various rights granted to citizens and the Parliament of Guyana in its attempt to institute casino gambling in Guyana.
4. That the Petitioners, representing a significant amount of Christian congregations in Guyana, therefore petition the members of Guyana's Parliament to cease and desist from entertaining or passing Bill No. 30 of 2006, or any other Bill designed to legalize Casino Gambling in Guyana:
5. That the Petitioners have engaged in academic research and verbal polling in its various districts, and can sincerely conclude that the majority of Guyanese if given the opportunity to participate in the political process as the Constitution guarantees would be unalterably opposed to such a move. Our position is taken on these grounds:
  - i) That Government's approach thus far on the issue has illustrated little regard for Sections 13 and 50 of the Constitution of Guyana. It has not involved civil society in any meaningful consultation on the issue, nor have they engaged Parliament in any form of discussion. This represents a considerable lapse of judgement: given the deleterious effects that casino gambling has been shown to have on localities, counties and countries.
  - ii) That Government has offered no study to show the social impact of legalized gambling in Guyana. On the other hand, there exists a lot of evidence to show that, with our weak law enforcement, judicial, legislative and social infrastructure, the advent of casino gambling could see Guyana moving from a "Jurisdiction of

Concern” in the USA State Department’s money-laundering list, to a “Jurisdiction of Primary Concern”. In this regard, we refer readers to the International Narcotics Strategy Control Report for 2006 (INSCR 2006) and its “List of Vulnerability Factors” at the URL <http://www.state.gov/p/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2006/vol2/html/62140.htm> as well as the comprehensive “Comparative Table for Money-Laundering Countries” at the URL <http://www.state.gov/p/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2006/vol2/html/62141.htm>. See also pages 5 and 6 of the “*Draft Position of the Church of Jesus Christ on Casino Gambling*”, an addendum to this petition.

iii) That basic academic research shows that some of the deleterious effects of gambling are:

- a. The creation of false values including the “get-rich-quick” illusion.
- b. Discouragement of thrift, honest enterprise and a productive work ethic.
- c. Promotion of greed – a vice which is apparently latent in everyone.
- d. Temptation to weak-willed persons, who frequently develop an addiction to gambling.
- e. Family neglect and domestic violence, thus undermining the most important unit of society.
- f. Wastage of money which could be used for productive purposes.
- g. Enrichment of a few, and impoverishment of a majority.
- h. Increase in crime, since gamblers tend to engage in crime to obtain money to gamble.
- i. Pauperization of the gamblers, who often will have to resort to begging in order to gamble or just survive.

- j. **Promotion of opportunities for illegal activity including money laundering, thus leading to corruption in the public or/and private sectors.**

6. That therefore the Petitioners urge:

- i) That casino gambling not be legalized in Guyana for the Cricket World Cup 2007, or at any time, and that this haste to have Bill No. 30 of 2006 introduced without consulting the major stakeholders means that our government is being held to ransom by vested interests..
- ii) That Government cannot and must not be held to ransom by any stakeholder because it facilitated investors' efforts to benefit from tourism and CWC 2007. We Guyanese will not have any type of tourism at any cost.
- iii) That consideration of Draft Legislation should be deferred until after Cricket World Cup 2007 when a national consensus can be reached on the issue after comprehensive consultation with all stakeholders.
- iv) That all issued licences, promises, or assurances must be withdrawn.
- v) That full and unbiased recognition be made of all research papers on the issue so that the Government and all Guyanese citizens can learn from the past and not be burdened with repeating the mistakes other nations have made.

7. That the Petitioners have already accessed and studied a representative body of work, and would immediately recommend that all Parliamentarians and readers peruse the Issue Brief of the Center for Arizona Policy (January 2006) found at <http://azpolicy.org/pdf/Gb1HarmsOfGambling.pdf>.

8. That the abovementioned report is most current and not outdated, and gives a concise outline of the harms that legalized gambling will bring to Guyana, and that the social cost to Guyana will likely outweigh its nebulous benefits.
9. That the Petitioners have also produced a draft document entitled "*Legal, Moral, Social, and Constitutional Considerations in Addressing the Responsibilities of Government with regard to Casino Gambling in Guyana*" that deals with this and related issues. It is a well researched paper which clearly elucidates the concerns of Guyanese citizens generally. The document is to be found at the URL: <http://www.caribevangelical.org/pdfs/guyanagambling.pdf> and is also attached as an addendum to this petition. It outlines Guyana's perilous descent at the level of governance and constitutional issues. As a maturing democracy, we cannot ignore the implications of these findings.
10. That the Christian community throughout Guyana is deeply troubled by the stand initially taken by the Government of Guyana, but maintains that there is still time for redress.
11. That the Petitioners implore government's commitment to engage a national discussion on this issue. We urge Christians, Muslims and Hindus in Guyana to fully engage in this national discussion mindful of the sometimes emotive nature of the issues to be discussed.
12. That the Petitioners pray that God guide our Members of Parliament as they consider the negative implications of Bill No. 30 of 2006, and thereafter vote for its defeat, our government having initially neglected to involve Guyana's citizens, including its Members of Parliament, in the decision-making process.
13. That your Petitioners have secured the cooperation and voluntary services of Member of Parliament Volda Lawrence who has agreed to present this Petition in the National Assembly.

14. Wherefore your Petitioners humbly pray that the National Assembly will be pleased to accept their Petition and permit due process for the withdrawal of Bill No. 30 of 2006.

AND YOUR PETITIONERS IN DUTY BOUND WILL EVER PRAY

Reverend Raphael Massiah

*Raphael Massiah*

Reverend Alphonso Porter

*R. Alphonso Porter*

Pastor Lloyd Stewart

*Lloyd Stewart*