

## Donald Trump Fights Indian Casinos

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### Description

Businessman Donald Trump tries to convince Congress that American Indian casinos that don't pay taxes are unconstitutional and that they spur organized crime.

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## **CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE**

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## **Transcript**

Donald Trump Fights Indian Casinos

JACK FORD, co-host:

Six years ago, Congress upheld the right of Native Americans to own and run casinos on their land. Since then, virtually all of these new casinos have been tremendously successful. But while they've been raking in billions, not a dime of that gets taxed by the government. Now, not surprisingly, there's a fight being waged by some who say the playing field isn't level. NBC's Fred Francis has the story.

FRED FRANCIS reporting:

For hundreds of years the Mille Lacs Ojibwa Indians have danced to give their thanks to the Great Spirit, thanks for the tribe's wealth, a wealth once based on the vast herds of buffalo that roamed across the plains. It's been a lot of years since the Ojibwas last hunted, a lot of desperately poor years. But now the Ojibwas are rich again, thanks to a new buffalo: casino gambling. The Ojibwas net a million dollars a month from their Grand Casino in northern Minnesota. Just two years ago, welfare was the tribe's main source of income. Now, 2 1/2 million gamblers a year have brought a windfall to the Ojibwas and other Indian tribes nationwide.

In 1988, Congress passed a law upholding the rights of Native Americans to operate casinos. It has been a pot of gold on these reservations. There are now 85 casinos in 19 states taking in some \$6 billion a year, and since the Indian nations are sovereign, they do not pay taxes on their gambling profits. Some critics say that is wrong.

Mr. DONALD TRUMP: Not one dollar goes in taxes from Indian reservations to the federal, to the state governments.

FRANCIS: Donald Trump is leading the attack on Indian gambling. His special target is a giant Connecticut casino that, like all Indian casinos, operates tax-free.

Mr. TRUMP: I can tell you this: They're taking money away from the church. They're taking money away

from the state of Connecticut.

FRANCIS: Well, now you sound like, now you sound like a politician.

Mr. TRUMP: They're taking money...

FRANCIS: "They're taking money away from old people."

Mr. TRUMP: Excuse me. Excuse me. They are taking money away from the old people.

FRANCIS: From the church.

Mr. TRUMP: They're taking money away from the senior citizens.

FRANCIS: Are they taking money away from you?

Mr. TRUMP: I really don't know that it affects me as much as it affects states, governments, senior citizens, and taxpayers.

Mr. RICK HILL (Chairman, National Indian Gaming Association): We're governments. We're nations, we have sovereignty, and when you look at the tax issue in and of itself, these dollars go right back into our communities for governmental uses and purposes.

FRANCIS: Feeding your kids?

Mr. HILL: Feeding our children...

FRANCIS: Educating.

Mr. HILL: Educating our children. Taking care of our elders.

FRANCIS: And providing jobs. Before the casino opened, almost half the Ojibwas were out of work.

Now, anyone who wants a job gets one. Gambling is supporting a \$30 million Ojibwa construction boom that includes a new casino hotel, a health clinic, roads, homes and the tribes' proudest project, two schools where children will learn not only the basics, but also the ancient Ojibwa language.

Mr. HILL: When Donald Trump talks about an un-level playing field, well, the playing field has never been level for the American Indian. It's always been an uphill battle, and it continues to be an uphill battle.

FRANCIS: And Trump is making sure it will be uphill, warning that Indian gambling is vulnerable to organized crime.

Mr. TRUMP: What you're going to have is, you're going to have the biggest organized crime problem in the history of this country. Al Capone is going to look like a baby.

Mr. HILL: I've heard the McCarthyism scare tactic time and time again, and there's no proof. Justice on two occasions had reported to Congress that there hasn't been any organized crime, reorganized crime or unorganized crime in Indian country.

Offscreen Voice: The committee will come to order.

FRANCIS: This is no idle skirmish for Donald Trump. It's all-out war. He took his fight against the Indians to Congress.

Mr. TRUMP: To sit here and listen as people are saying that there's no organized crime, that there's no money-laundering, that there's no anything, and that an Indian chief is going to tell "Joey Killer" to please get off his reservation, is almost unbelievable to me.

FRANCIS: The head of the FBI's organized crime unit says Trump is scare-mongering.

Mr. JIM MOODY (Unit Chief, Organized Crime/Drug Intelligence): We do not see a concerted effort by organized crime to infiltrate Indian gaming. We've had a couple of instances that we've investigated.

We've had one that we've prosecuted.

FRANCIS: He didn't convince Trump. This is a gut issue for The Donald.

Mr. TRUMP: It's going to blow. It's just a question of time, and when it blows you are going to have a lot of very embarrassed faces sitting right where you folks are sitting right now. Thank you very much.

FRANCIS: Rick Hill tries to ignore Trump and focus on his people.

Mr. HILL: They tried to take our culture. They tried to use genocide over a number of years to kill our people, and now we're left with Indian gaming. So Donald Trump or no one else in this country is going to take Indian gaming away, because this is our survival.