

Local DoD Anti-Casino Testimonials

Leadership, Base Employees, Business & Community Leaders Voice their concerns regarding the casino

Based on research for this report, in discussing the issue informally, after working hours, with dozens of employees, the majority are not in favor of the casino, and hardly anyone thinks it makes sense at the front gate. Location was one of the main objections discussed and the main objection received via CasiNO surveys in town more than a year ago.

Disclaimer: The views expressed by individuals below are personal opinions as Ridgecrest citizens, and do not in any way reflect any opinion or position of NAWCWD. Comments are simply personal, "after-working hours" reflections.

NAWCWD Leadership Testimonials

CAPT Mark Storch, USN (Ret.) Former Commander, NAWCWD, and Commanding Officer, NAWS China Lake. "The Navy at China Lake doesn't need a casino immediately outside the front gate. Nothing says "we don't care" from the community to future BRAC Commissioners, for example, regarding the community's view of the Navy, than a casino. It is cynical on the community's part: it is within walking distance for any E-1--arguably our newest and lowest paid among us--who have few transportation choices and little pay, but who can get their gambling and alcohol addiction started thanks to this. I don't care for a casino anywhere, but surely not at the front gate. It is nothing less than preying on our youngsters. It sends a negative message, when there is so, so much outstanding value from China Lake for the Navy and the Nation."

Paul Valovich and other local and military leaders express concerns about casino. According to a News Review article, Paul Valovich is a Vietnam veteran, has a master's degree in aeronautical engineering and he has commanded both at Point Mugu and China Lake. And in a DI article dated April 22, 2016 entitled "Public Pans Casino Plans" with a sub-title of "Increased Crime, bankruptcies, gambling addictions, corrupting schoolchildren, and **interfering with the mission of the base**" Valovich spoke up at a public meeting, "how could you spring this on this community with such short notice? But he was not alone. The public turned out in droves to attend the City Council meeting. And most of them said, "NO!" "In all, roughly 30 people spoke up, mostly opposed to the idea." Tim Fox, speaking for the Navy, said, "there are a few military compatibility concerns." "I am trying to recover from shock and being sick. I can't believe this has been sprung on us," Pat Farris said. "We have enough of a crisis going on about our water and to throw us into another crisis decision. I am appalled. I am sorry, but I am appalled. People chose to live here because they say it is a great place to raise a family. Well they won't be saying this after this comes."

(<http://www.ridgecrestca.com/article/20160422/NEWS/160429884>)

VADM Dennis V. McGinn, USN (RET), assistant secretary of the Navy for energy, installations, and environment, strongly emphasized that the China Lake Community needs to address the water shortfall which jeopardizes the long-term sustainability of the installation. This is a condensed article by Dan Cohen, in the Association of Defense Communities, April 26, 2015.

"Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake is a valuable asset for the Navy that likely wouldn't be threatened by a prospective BRAC round, the Navy's top installations official told the China Lake Alliance during a luncheon....At the same time, the aquifer that China Lake relies on is in overdraft, **jeopardizing the long-term sustainability of the installation...Even if there were not China Lake and the NAWC, this would be an unsustainable situation,**" he said, reported the Ridgecrest Daily Independent. "If you're pulling more out of the aquifer than is being replenished, it's going to go away, and there will be economic impacts of that."

McGinn's comments were hardly surprising **for the alliance, which has made ensuring the long-term sustainability of the aquifer that supports the IWV its highest priority.** The alliance, the community-military support group for the installation, has been working with officials from Kern County and the Navy on a solution, which is expected to take several years to identify.

(<https://www.defensecommunities.org/blog/headlines/china-lake-community-needs-to-address-water-shortfall-mcginn-says/>)

David Shipley, NAWCWD Security Officer. I moved here to Ridgecrest 35 years ago. I moved here not because of a job, but because I visited the area and said, "This is a really neat place to raise a family". And it was. In my career, I've had the unfortunate circumstance multiple times to sit across the table from someone who is being told they can no longer work due to financial indebtedness. Which means that they no longer are suitable for a government position because of security clearance requirements. I've watched grown men cry as we tell them that they can no longer have this employment, and they won't be able to be employable with our defense contractor teams either. I believe a casino would increase this opportunity. My concern is the impact to the lives of the people in our community. I know that being fiscally advantageous shouldn't be the sole reason that we decide on this issue. So, I ask that you make the decision that is best for us, and disapprove this.

Dave Shipley (Statement made at May 11, 2016 Council meeting. Video time stamp: (1:27:05 – 1:29:50.)

Former Base Commander. I would have a major concern about a casino at the front gate of the base at China Lake, one of the nation's premiere Navy laboratories. First, the critical water situation must be addressed. The current shortages and increased demand are serious issues and lately there has been significant "sky is falling" messaging. Also, I would be concerned about our young sailors having a casino just outside the front gate. It is a known fact that casinos pose a significant gambling risk which could affect sailors security clearances and financial stability. I also have concerns regarding the "sovereign nation" designation where our base would have no jurisdiction over what the Tribe chooses to do, regardless of what the Tribal leaders say. And finally, there is precedence for the base Command to become involved with controversial issues. Years ago, I was against the prison coming in because I took a position in support of military families. I also took a position on a controversial school bond issue. A letter was written to the Navy objecting to my involvement, but my position was upheld because employee and family safety and security falls under Command authority and responsibility.

Former Base Commander (Phone interview. Unnamed at this time, pending a possible news article in the near future.)

Sterling Haaland, Former Executive Director, NWC, warns Ridgecrest that "the casino here is a bad idea and should never be implemented. It would be the beginning of a long-term decline in the operation of NAWS, and the city of Ridgecrest would not be a quality place to live."

Mr. Haaland now lives in Montana and has significant experience and knowledge of Montana water rights especially with two of the tribes in Montana and their ongoing "sovereign nation" battle to gain water rights. To start understanding where Montana is on water rights, Mr. Haaland recommends citizens Google (1) Blackfeet water rights compact (2) Confederated Salish and Kootenai water compact.

Sterling Haaland official statement to Ridgecrest is as follows:

"I lived in Ridgecrest for 30 years and was the Executive Director of NAWCWD from 1993 to 1998. In my opinion a casino located by the front gate of the Base is the beginning of a long-term decline in the operation of the NAWS and the quality of the products produced by the NAWCWD. This in turn means that the city of Ridgecrest will not be a quality place to live.

I have lived in Montana for the last 20 years and have observed what has happened with two Native American tribes (Blackfeet and Confederated Salish and Kootenai) claiming water rights throughout the state. The Blackfeet Nation water compact is based on an 1855 treaty between the Blackfeet and the U.S. government. It took the Blackfeet nation 38 years to gain control of all water that comes off the eastern front of the Rocky Mountains and flows through the reservation plus \$470M of federal funds to implement the plan.

The city of Ridgecrest had better be sure what the long-term water rights of the Timbisha Shoshone nation has over the IWW water flowing from the eastern front of the Southern Sierras. **This could drastically affect the operation of the base.**

In 2015 the Montana state government approved the Confederated Salish and Kootenai water compact. It was sent to D.C. for approval by Congress. What it does? The 1,400-page document that took decades of negotiations **transferred the water rights away from off reservation irrigators to the tribe. These rights were based on a 1885 treaty. The city of Ridgecrest better make sure there isn't a treaty between the Timbisha Shoshone nation and the U.S. government.**

A casino is a bad idea that should never be implemented. The economic value of a casino doesn't compare to the economic value the base will bring to Ridgecrest in the future. Keep the NAWS and NAWCWD strong! Support our warriors and God bless the U.S.A.

Sheriff Donny Youngblood -- Kern County. Ridgecrest is within my district and it has a reputation of being a "model community." People don't believe me when I tell them Ridgecrest has little to no graffiti, or gangs, and they have low crime. I love to come to Ridgecrest. Formally, I'm not taking a position one way or the other on the casino at this time, but I will say that if a casino comes in you will have increased arrests including drunk driving incidents. It will bring prostitutes, tattoo parlors and pot shops. When these businesses settle in the community, neighboring businesses are not happy because they will have an increased risk for crime, and at a time when you have no jail. Also, there will be more demand for mental health care and your town does not have enough specialized care in these areas.

Business and community leaders, base employee testimonials

I have had numerous businesses in this valley for a very long time, and I have raised my family here. Ridgecrest is a wonderful place to live and I want to keep it that way. Over the years, I have had numerous contracts with the base and the city and I enjoy working with both. As a businessman, it's easy to take neutral position on highly controversial issues that come to town because it's safe from a business perspective. But sometimes when a significant threat challenges our town, I feel a need to stand up. Casinos are great in Vegas. That's where they belong. They don't belong in small towns where they sap cash from hard working folks and just channel it to out-of-town interests. We are having a tough enough time with the money we now have. This is a ploy to get into engineer's pockets on base.

Obviously, whoever voted this in either did no homework at all or didn't want to listen for whatever reason. This thing smells to high heavens and I think some on the council who have businesses who could possibly profit from this deal in any way may need to recuse themselves from any further votes.

Nothing here seems right. I never understood why this wasn't put on the ballot to begin with. If this is such a fantastic deal, like the developers preach, then they should have no problem at all putting this on the upcoming November ballot, only seven months away. Hardly costs a thing. If the developers object, then you know it was a bad deal from the beginning. I have been against this deal from day one.

Let's put it on the ballot and let the people decide this time.

George and Carolyn Bertrand

While we don't necessarily disagree with a casino in the vicinity of Ridgecrest, we think the proposed location near the base entrance is totally unacceptable. If the casino had been subjected to a vote of the people in Ridgecrest, we doubt it would have passed. If a casino is to be built in this area, it should be located nearer to the main highways (14 and 395) through this area, where it will receive the most visibility.

Ed and Carol Jeter

Placing a casino next to the front gate of the base is a bad idea.

When the founders of the Naval Ordnance Test Station chose the Indian Wells Valley to establish their highly classified research and development base, it was largely because there were few people here—safety and security could relatively easily be maintained. But putting a busy, high-traffic casino next to China Lake’s main gate is a bad idea. Actually, putting a casino anywhere in our valley is a bad idea. Casinos have a habit of attracting a clientele that is counterproductive to the mission of a military base. Having untold numbers of people, many of them from outside the area, congregating right outside China Lake’s main gate can only make it more difficult for the base to effectively maintain security. Having sailors, scientists, engineers and support personnel spending their hard-earned pay checks at the gambling tables—helping to line the coffers of casinos—is a situation that is not in the best interest of the most important and influential entity in our valley, the navy base at China Lake.

In addition, allowing a casino to be established on “sovereign land” where the city of Ridgecrest relinquishes all control of that land, runs counter to the idea of careful management of our precious limited resources.

A casino in Ridgecrest is a bad idea and should never be allowed to happen.

Mark Pahuta

The approval of this casino at our front gate threatens national security, the wellbeing of our military, and the integrity of our community. It needs to be stopped. The casino would be under the auspices of a Native American tribe. For all intents and purposes, a foreign nation. This poses an extreme security risk for surveillance of our activities. The most vulnerable of our military are the young sailors. Casinos drag strip clubs, prostitution, drugs, and crime in their wake. We don’t need a Sodom and Gomorrah outside the front gate. It is true our military can find these, “Diversions”, elsewhere, but God forbid they find it in Ridgecrest.

Everyone has seen the signs for cheap drinks and food displayed by casinos. The fine technical and business professionals on base and in town will not fall victim to the allure of gambling. The folks in our community who can least afford to lose money in a slot machine will be drawn to these come-ons.

Ridgecrest has been an undiscovered gem for decades. We don’t need the carpet baggers and the havoc they reek everywhere they tread. I say NO!

Mike Bramson, Research Physicist

To the entertainment seekers of Ridgecrest,

Some of you might be thinking a casino sounds like a nice addition to fill the large gaps in Ridgecrest's entertainment offerings. Some might think it sounds like a bit of fun or something to do. But I would strongly encourage you to visit a few similarly sized facilities around the state or talk to others that have. Many are dark, depressing, and empty much of the time.

Psychologists employed by the gaming industry have an exceptional understanding of the various motivations that drive an individual's willingness to risk money. Since consistently attracting big spenders is not practical for a small or even mid-sized casino, the psychologists have pointed those ventures at a very different risk motive - source of funds. A person is more likely to risk smaller amounts of money that are found or otherwise unearned. If the sourcing of the funds is regularly occurring, then the risk tolerance increases further. Combined with slot machines that are designed specifically to inspire addictive behavior, the Casino is able to collect that income over and over again, month after month.

So for the small to midsize casino, like the one proposed in Ridgecrest, the ideal client is actually someone that gets money from small regularly occurring payments of unearned income. Yep, the target demographic tends to be individuals receiving social security, disability or other government assistance. I'd be willing to bet that the number of check cashing businesses was a key indicator. And if that were not bad enough, preying on the most vulnerable members of a community,

those already utilizing a social safety net, tends to lead to significant increases in poverty, homelessness and crime.

Dylan Riley
Engineer and Co-Founder, YouVee Solar LLC

I am a base employee, as is my wife. We intend to stay in Ridgecrest and raise our children here. However, multiple studies have shown that casinos bring crime, economic disparity issues, and increased drug use. If the city thinks that a casino will be a draw to the area it is mistaken. Young professionals want to live in safe areas and do not want to live and work next to a casino. If this casino project were to come into town, I feel you will see a significant number of young ESPDs, my family included, leave the area, because we chose to come to a family friendly community. If you want to continue to attract top talent, you must preserve strong values.

Dakota Sinclair

I am not in favor of any sovereign entity or nation establishing itself in the City of Ridgecrest that local law enforcement agencies have little or no authority over in order to prevent them from changing our constitution and vital protections for self-serving purposes. I am concerned that these operations generate large amounts of revenue, most of which does not directly benefit the majority of the people it is intended to support and sustain.

Tim LaFromboise

I do not see how the building of an Indian Casino in Ridgecrest could possibly enrich the lives of its citizens. If I'm not mistaken, one of the considerations to the City to allow this construction was the funding by the developers of additional Ridgecrest police resources. This fact alone should clearly indicate that the public and commercial promoters of this endeavor expect crime to increase with its presence. When I drive around some areas of Ridgecrest, I see house after house that is boarded up and abandoned. There a lot of people in our community who are struggling to make ends meet, and a casino will call to them with the promise of quick cash. When the promise is broken, some people will turn to crime to replenish their resources. I am not in favor of building a casino in Ridgecrest.

Mark Stockbauer, Engineer

While I don't have significant moral objections to casinos, per se, we, the citizens of Ridgecrest, certainly don't need one. We do not need the increased traffic (around town and "off the highway"), the increased crime, and the increased lines at the Station gate that are sure to be imported with one . . . and we sure don't need the unpredictable, but certainly detrimental drain on the water table.

I do have significant objection of possibly being forced to bear the burden of imported water while the Indian casino, agricultural companies, and small-business-profiteering interests, make out like bandits. In a desert draught situation, the citizens basic needs must always come first. Nor can we tolerate the uncertainties of a "sovereign" Indian state that might well decide to increase its bottom line by pursuing inappropriate "agricultural" interests (pistachios, say, or alfalfa--or hemp!), by erecting massive solar farms or trailer parks, or by selling the Valley's water. All possibilities, and, all promises aside, all detrimental to the quality of life in our town . . . and all detrimental to the operation and maintenance of the unique Navy laboratory next door.

This is also very detrimental to the base's efforts to recruit top-notch scientific, engineering, and support personnel; and to its continuing role in the defense of this nation.

That laboratory is the Valley. I have yet to hear any sort of support for this ridiculous casino project from any of my friends and acquaintances, which shows me that the Council is not listening to the public on this issue because it fears the loss of whatever bone it's been thrown by the casino interests.

L. L. Doig
China Lake native, local
historian, recently retired
NWC/NAWCWD Command Historian

Highly unregulated – unenforceable -- in perpetuity! Placement of an Indian Casino in the Business Park in Ridgecrest is a dangerous idea; one likely very detrimental to our community. We are sorely disappointed in our City Council’s rush to support this tribe and developer largely disregarding their fiduciary obligation to our citizens for adequate due diligence. Once the land transfers into trust for the tribe it transforms the land into “Indian Country”, with sovereignty, under tribal jurisdiction. As such, the trust may not be alienated without an act of Congress; it is fully exempt from state and local taxes, and entirely removed from state and local land use regulation. Per 25 CFR... “None of the laws, ordinances, codes, resolutions, rules, or other regulations of any State or political subdivision thereof limiting, zoning, or otherwise governing, regulating, or controlling the use or development of any real or personal property, **including water rights**, shall be applicable to such property...”. This means, that if that land in the center of our community is placed in trust for a tribe, we have lost **for perpetuity** the authority to plan, zone or regulate any operation on the land. One might ask why the vast majority of other casinos sit well outside of city limits. Don’t be fooled, the loosely written waiver of sovereignty included in the MSA provides little or no real protection. Such a waiver must be very carefully crafted with very specific legal details for it to become enforceable; a fact well known and exploited by tribes to make promises they know cannot be upheld.

Developers now offering 400% returns via online investment scheme? Another disturbing issue is the conduct of this developer. Mr. White, along with another casino developer put out “An Investment Primer for Financing Indian Casinos” (©2016). (<https://www.slideshare.net/THEgarygreen/investment-primer-for-financing-indian-casinos>)

In this document, they describe the means and methods by which they create a potential 400% return for the investor. Through a combination of creative finance packaging, interest charges, taking a percentage of winnings, double-up by leasing machines for a percentage of winnings, fee income, management contracts, front-load financing, etc., the investors have managed to design a model that lines their pockets richly while taking from the tribes. The startling final paragraph in this document states “The fact remains that like Hollywood’s insultingly fictionalized “Comancheros”, modern day non-Indians offering financing, slot machine deals, management consulting, and other “services” are fundamentally not unlike those heinous exploiters of the past. Reaping a 400% profit that would be criminal usury in some states but is routine in Indian casinos, is simply a modern-day equivalent of trading beads and trinkets for Manhattan Island.” It takes a special kind of arrogance to publicize so blatantly your willingness to abuse another group to benefit yourself. This is who we are trusting to do the best for our community? This developer and this tribe have also shopped “off-reservation” to put a casino in several other locations in California and Nevada, which have failed; some due to arguably wrongful and dishonest actions of the parties. Now they are here making promises in Ridgecrest.

Prior City Council DID NOT due diligence. Post-casino-decision research conducted that should have been conducted day one! After putting in a minimum of 120 hours of research, originally at the request of a member of our council, we have learned more than we ever cared to know about Indian gaming, the repercussions to communities both good and bad, and the reputation of the specific parties involved. The process of true due diligence is not understood by our council, which has caused our community to be sold short and put at risk as the casino deal moves forward. This unbiased process of thoroughly studying the legitimacy and impacts of a proposal, while providing adequate transparency to the public, and insuring strongly worded enforceable contracts should be unequivocal. In our opinion, the process to date has sorely failed. We cannot possibly list all of our concerns here, but they are numerable and troubling.

We love our community. We want the best for it. We want growth, change, and to see our town position itself for the best future. The potential of this project concerns us greatly and we ask everyone to get involved, do some homework and ask questions. Form your own opinions based on facts and data.

Don't allow yourself to blindly believe and follow the "wing-and-a-prayer" model we see happening now. Our future and the future of our community is too important.

Beth Sumners, Business Owner, Engineer, Consultant
Bill Sumners, Business Owner, Engineer, 34-year DoD employee (retired)

When the idea of a casino was first made public in spring of 2016, I like most residents thought it was an interesting concept worthy of study. The careful consideration the proposal merited, however, never came to pass. The idea was instead rushed through in a few months with little review or involvement by the community. The scope of this project and the potential impact it has on Ridgecrest are of such magnitude that the proposal should have been placed on the November 2016 ballot. Had it won or lost, at least decision makers would have solid evidence of the level of support such a facility has among the populace. The more I research the casino proposal, the more concerned I become. I am especially worried about the long-term financial prospects and potential for ongoing friction between the Timbisha tribe and Ridgecrest likely to result. The idea has been touted primarily for its economic benefits, citing estimates that at least 67,000 new visitors will visit Ridgecrest every year to visit the casino. It is very hard to believe that nearly 185 new people will visit the town every day to live up to these lofty projections. And when those goals are not met, how will that affect both the Tribe and Ridgecrest?

Jeff Scott, Aerospace Engineer

I would like to join the voices of opposition in our community to the proposition of building the Casino here, speaking from the perspective of a longtime local citizen. The integrity of Ridgecrest itself is in serious jeopardy. I am frightfully concerned about the detrimental impact the casino will have on our hometown businesses, as their unique characters are tremendous assets. Many family-owned restaurants, for example, bring great diversity to us--Chinese, Mexican, Japanese, French, Thai, American Barbecue, Vietnamese, and Diners, to name a few. Our small community is extremely lucky to have so many world cultures embedded within. In fact, it is quite remarkable. They are clearly very proud of the uniqueness of their restaurants and their dedication to the members of our community.

Hard-working local families have built their delightfully diverse businesses from the ground up, over several generations. For decades I have witnessed and greatly enjoyed how together the different restaurants bring color, classiness and, of course, a great variety of delicious cuisine to us. I came back to live and work in Ridgecrest, as I grew up here and love this area. Going back to these restaurants was one of the highlights of my return. Now, the possibility of the casino threatens to destroy small businesses by putting them out of business and robbing us of this priceless community integrity. This would be a tremendous, irreparable loss. Let us continue to support these businesses directly ourselves and continue to win the values they share with us in return! It's not worth the gamble!

Denali St. Amand, PhD (Pierre St. Amand's daughter)

In a recent Ridgecrest City Council meeting, a representative of the Timbisha Shoshone Tribe mentioned the Pechanga Casino as a positive example of what Ridgecrest can expect when the Tribe opens its casino in Ridgecrest. In response, Pastor Lyn Whitcomb, base engineer, and Pastor of the Cornerstone Bible Church, responded passionately about a highly personal, emotional, and devastating event involving his father becoming a gambling addict. As a result, his father was targeted by an individual at the Pechanga Casino, who eventually soaked him for most of the value of his home (by drawing cash out on a reverse mortgage) and giving the cash to them. The family had to take legal action at very large expense to get the person to stay away from their father. In summary, Pastor Whitcomb asked the Ridgecrest City Council at a public meeting to look at "the faces behind the money." Gambling does not lead to better lives, it leads to damaged lives. "

Lyn's Personal statement regarding the casino coming to town:

As a pastor, I am concerned about the negative effects of the proposed casino on young professionals and military personnel who work on the base as well as young people in our community. The proposed casino, on balance, will harm rather than help our community.

Many people respond by saying, "It's my money. I can do with it however I want." But here's where the Bible confronts our self-indulgent assumptions: everything we have, including our lives, our time, and our money, ultimately belongs to God. John Piper: "It is wrong to wager with a trust fund. And all we have, as humans, is a trust fund. Everything we have is a trust from God, to be used for His glory." [God] Himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything" (Acts 17:25). Faithful trustees may not gamble with a trust fund. They work and trade: value for value, just and fair. This is the pattern again and again in Scripture. And when you are handling the funds of another, how much more irresponsible it is to wager!"

Gambling is bad for the economy. The casino will probably boost the local economy in the short term. However, in the long term: "Casinos extract wealth from communities. Casinos typically weaken nearby businesses. Casinos typically hurt property values in host communities" (Why Casinos Matter). Therefore, the economic benefits of the casino will be like offering pure white sugar to a starving person: there will be a short-term sugar high but no long term nutritional value.

Gambling violates the Biblical role of government. According to Romans 13:1-4, God instituted civil government to protect people from those who would harm or exploit them. But think about how government-sponsored gambling relates to this God-given role of civil government. "State regulation of casinos creates a conflict of interest, in which the state is charged with protecting the public from the very business practices that generate revenue for the state and which the state is co-sponsoring. State governments are caught in a classic conflict of interest between their desire for more revenues and their responsibility to prevent harm to the public from unfair or exploitative practices...States have raced ahead to locate commercial casinos in struggling communities and to extract revenues from citizens in those communities" (Why Casinos Matter). In summary, a gambling casino in Ridgecrest will be detrimental to the community's moral climate and local economy.

Lyn Whitcomb, Electrical Engineer and Pastor, Cornerstone Bible Church

Casino will provide a rich environment for potential espionage activity.

As a past Navy employee and long-time local resident, I understand the Navy's security needs and dangers. The casino will provide a great venue for spies to identify and target government employees and military personnel who are either in financial difficulties or have gambling issues. These are known prime targets for spies to bait, seduce and/or entrap into espionage. Allowing a casino in our town we will be creating a single rich environment for espionage. Our situation in our very remote town is nothing like Nellis AFB where they are in the vicinity of Las Vegas but have numerous casinos and a large diversity of people patronizing them.

China Lake is not only our city's primary reason for existence, but one of our nation's premiere military weapons RDT&E laboratories. Why would we want to take any action that would put that facility and our nation's security in jeopardy? A casino, that at best, will only bring in a small amount of revenue for the city, after considering the additional infrastructure and police costs. In addition, the casino will have a significant impact on crime and public safety. I have no doubt it will cost our community far more than any possible minor monetary return. Do we not want to worship the gold over the morality and safety of our community? People come here and stay here because of the safe environment for raising their children. Why would we want to endanger that situation?

We should be able to disagree without bullying and degrading those with different opinions or goals. If we cannot treat our fellow man with dignity and respect, we will have lost our basic foundation to maintain our freedom and liberty. I say this because too many of those who support the casino have chosen smear campaigns against anyone who opposes the casino, especially on computer sites. This needs to stop and we need to focus on the real issues. I have spoken too far too many people who utilize Facebook chat sites that have reported a pattern of casino supporters posting nasty hurtful things about those who oppose the casino, calling them names like racists and smearing elected

officials. A pattern that repeats itself whenever a council member or other persons speaks out in opposition to the casino. This is a childish destructive practice that needs to stop. When this occurs, the casino supporters and Tribal leaders need to speak out against the bad behavior when they see it. People only stoop to the level of bullying and name calling because they have nothing meaningful to argue or they simply wish to put their desires above those of their fellow man. We are a community first, and respecting our fellow man is far too important.

A strong majority of people in the valley I have talked to oppose the casino, which is why I believe those who support a casino are opposed to a vote by the people. We need to put it on the ballot in November for a vote, and let the people speak not just the special interest. It is also important to note, if the casino is successful, we will have little control. If there is a legal challenge the casino will be able to out-spend us on legal costs 100/1.

Ronald Porter, 55+ year Valley resident and retired long-term China Lake employee!

We don't need any more traffic, and the proposed location is simply stupid; we don't need the increased crime and the heavy burden on our resources. We really don't need some "sovereign nation" stealing all of our water.

Susan Hennigan

This is a big enough issue it should be on the November ballot. I also think that us "outliers" should have a vote in this mess.

Stuart and Kathy Fields

Twenty-nine acres of prime business property, which was originally traded to owners with the stipulation that it would be a business park, is going to be used for one single business?... in the middle of town?... and [we will] relinquish all governmental jurisdictional control and responsibility forever? Having been born here, I have a certain claim to that property remaining part of my hometown, too. **The tribe's supposed historical connection to this area is dubious at best -- relinquishing that land to the sovereignty of an independent nation, is a far bigger decision than allowing the sale of property, changing business zoning, and approving construction. Turning over land to the jurisdiction of any other entity, should require a vote of the residents.** Any registered voters living within the 93555 (Ridgecrest) and 93527 (Inyokern) zip codes should have a say in the matter. Many of us have a much more direct cultural and historical connection to the Indian Wells Valley (IWV) than any members of the Timbisha Shoshone tribe: we were born here. Again, I'm a native of Ridgecrest. I'm a native Californian. And I'm a native American. I have a legitimate claim to keeping that land part of my home. **That 29 acres in the middle of the IWV currently from a governmental perspective belongs to all of us. Before it is given up we should all have the opportunity to vote on it.**

Barry McDonald, Former NAWCWD Rocketeer managing editor