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Almost 100,000

Resort investors flooded with signatures of registered Maine voters

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(Oxford, Maine) It has taken only 20 days for proponents of a four-season resort and casino to collect petition signatures of 99,000 registered Maine voters, about 10% of all registered voters in the state.

"The ease with which we gathered them was breathtaking," said Stephen Barber, president of Black Bear Entertainment, LLC, the company that has proposed the resort complex in Oxford. "Without a doubt, the layoffs crushing Maine families have persuaded voters to take a new look at the opportunity that a four-season resort and casino will create."

At a press conference on October 15, Black Bear announced that it hoped to collect 80,000 signatures by February 1.

Barber said an average of 5,000 signatures a day "has to be some sort of record," and he said his group is particularly pleased that towns like Falmouth, Freeport, Cumberland, York and Kennebunk revealed very strong support for the proposal to build a resort complex in Oxford.

"That's totally new support, and probably reflects anxiety about state cuts to education. When the legislature makes the next round of cuts, it's going to be very deep and very painful. The thirty-two million we will send to education every year is a significant contribution, and it won't cost taxpayers a dime," Barber said.

Jim Boldebook, one of Barber's business partners in Black Bear Entertainment, said the nature of this recession is playing a large part in the voters' change in attitude.

"It's not just fringe companies, it's Maine's most respected and most venerable companies that are closing stores, shutting factories, and laying off workers," Boldebook said. "We will be creating close to a thousand jobs, and I think folks are expressing appreciation for our determination to make that happen."

The next step in putting a statewide referendum on the ballot is for the signatures to be "clerked" at the town or city hall of the municipality in which they were collected. After that happens, Black Bear will deliver them to Maine's Secretary of State to be validated.

The mission of Black Bear Entertainment is to "Create desperately needed jobs for Maine people, and boost education funding to communities across the state." More on the web: www.PromoteMaine.com.

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