



CITY OF SHREVEPORT

MAYOR TOM ARCENEUX

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Tom Arceneaux

MAYOR

06/1/2023

**STATEMENT BY MAYOR TOM ARCENEUX REGARDING AMENDMENT TO
SMOKE-FREE ORDINANCE**

Members of the Shreveport City Council introduced and, on Tuesday, May 23, the Council passed Ordinance 46 of 2023, which permits smoking in the gaming portions of Shreveport's casinos except for 25% of the gaming area. Ultimately, such decisions are legislative choices subject to a possible mayoral veto.

There are sufficient votes on the Council to override any veto of ordinance 46. Considering that, I have determined not to veto the legislation. However, I will not sign it. Section 4.21 of the City Charter provides that if I do not sign or veto legislation within seven days after it is submitted to me by the Council, it becomes law without my signature. That is the option that I will use for Ordinance 46.

The opponents of Ordinance 46 presented compelling testimony about the health dangers of second-hand smoke. Particularly moving was the testimony by a woman on oxygen who apparently contracted breathing difficulties while breathing second-hand smoke working at a casino. She had never been a smoker.

In addition, it is likely, at least for the present, that the non-smoking areas of the two Shreveport casinos will only include machines, not table games (poker, blackjack, and the like). Dealers and managers will have to choose between risk to their health from second-hand smoke and their livelihoods.

The Shreveport casinos complained that they felt at a competitive disadvantage because smoking is permitted at competing casinos on the east side of the Red River. Based on the City's revenues from the casinos, there was an immediate drop in casino gaming

revenue in the range of 35% when the ban went into effect (the drop from July to August, 2021). The numbers have not recovered, still being about 83% of pre-ban levels. However, based on my observation, neither casino has made any significant effort to avail itself of the competitive advantage of offering smoke-free gaming to the likely majority of gaming customers who do not smoke.

Now that Ordinance 46 will become effective, I have several expectations about the Shreveport riverfront casinos that I hope each will heed:

1. If prohibiting smoking was a substantial cause of decreased revenue, revenues should see an immediate and substantial increase. If not, the City should revisit the smoking issue.
2. The casinos should make significant investments in facilities and programming to make them competitive with the most successful casinos on the east side of Red River.
3. The casinos should insure that the non-smoking sections of the casinos have separate ventilation systems that reduce the impact of second-hand smoke on non-smoking patrons and employees.
4. The casinos should accommodate non-smoking employees who choose to work in the non-smoking areas of the casinos. I urge both casinos to arrange scheduling to accommodate non-smoking workers, rather than the other way around.
5. The casinos should ensure that the entrances to the non-smoking areas do not require patrons or employees seeking to play or work there to pass through smoking areas.
6. The casinos should make the same gaming options available in the non-smoking areas as the smoking areas for the benefit of both non-smoking patrons and non-smoking employees such as dealers and managers.

I believe the best long-term solution to address employee health and protection from the bad health effects of second-hand smoke in casinos is a statewide smoke-free statute. Failing that, the City hopes that appropriate governing authorities would make all the casinos on both sides of the Red River smoke-free. Governments could accomplish that by making each side's ordinance effective upon the adoption by the other of the smoking ban.

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