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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Legion calls Gettysburg casino plan ‘National Disgrace’

INDIANAPOLIS (August 12, 2010) – Calling a plan to build a casino on the footprint of America’s bloodiest domestic battle site a “national disgrace,” the head of the nation’s largest veterans organization urged Pennsylvania officials to quash the project and protect the sanctity of Gettysburg.

The American Legion’s National Commander Clarence E. Hill reflected on the historical significance of the field where 160,000 Union and Confederate troops fought and nearly 8,000 died.

“When Abraham Lincoln dedicated the cemetery at Gettysburg, he said, ‘...we cannot dedicate – we cannot consecrate – we cannot hallow – this ground,’” Hill said. “Lincoln recognized then that it was beyond the power of men and women to consecrate this land any more than had already been done by the brave men who struggled there. Surely, he nor anyone else envisioned that someday this cemetery would be proposed as the site for a casino.”

Although the proposal advanced by a Gettysburg business developer would place the casino a half-mile from the 6,000-acre Gettysburg National Military Park, preservationists point out that the site would be next to where Union cavalry advanced toward the South Cavalry field – a substantial scene of the fighting. It is also believed that there are a number of soldiers buried in this area in unmarked graves.

“The battlefield actually encompassed a greater area than is currently designated as a military historical site. In order to show the proper respect, we believe that something as frivolous as a casino should be much more than a half mile away,” said Hill. “We need to be sensitive to the fact that this is a hallowed resting place and its tranquility should be preserved as much as possible.”

The Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board (PGCB) hopes to reach a decision before the end of the year after a series of public meetings.

Hill pointed out that this consideration comes at a time when the remains of American heroes buried at Arlington National Cemetery have also been disrespected through a series of malfeasance by government officials.

“At least at Arlington National Cemetery, the desecrations were done in error and out of poor judgment.” he said “There is no way that The American Legion or the American people – especially her veterans – will stand by and let the memory and meaning of Gettysburg National Military Park be besmirched by this misbegotten plan to erect a casino in proximity to this hallowed ground.”

Officials with The American Legion encourage veterans and other concerned Americans to register their opposition to the project by calling the PGCB or by attending the next public hearing. The number to the PGCB is (717) 346-8300. The hearing will be at the Gettysburg Comfort Suites Inn at 10 a.m. Aug. 31. The address for the meeting is 945 Baltimore Pike in Gettysburg.

With a current membership of 2.5-million wartime veterans, The American Legion was founded in 1919 on the four pillars of a strong national security, veterans affairs, Americanism, and youth programs. Legionnaires work for the betterment of their communities through more than 14,000 posts across the nation.

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Indianapolis: Joe March or John Raughter (317) 630-1253, cell (317) 748-1926 /(317) 441-8847. A high resolution photo of National Commander Hill is available at www.legion.org.