



E·C·G·R·A
ERIE COUNTY GAMING REVENUE AUTHORITY

**EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR'S
REPORT
FOR
AUGUST
2024**

June 2024

Meeting with Executive Director
Ongoing Social Media Management
Ongoing Consulting
June Comms

IMPLEMENTED

- 17 total June posts
- 9 total new graphics created in June
- Special Events
 - Media advisory and pitching
 - Press Event
 - Press release and distribution
 - Grant recipient graphics
- 2023–2024 Annual Report
- ARPA report
- Strategic Marketing Planning with Kate Philips and Executive Director

IN PROGRESS | 2024 Grant Releases and Graphics

- 2023–2024 Annual Report graphics
- Community Assets – Arts, Culture, Heritage
 - Media advisory and pitching
 - Press Event
 - Press release and distribution
 - Grant recipient graphics
- Holiday Graphics
- Economic Impact Report rollout
 - Press release
 - PowerPoint presentation
 - Social media graphics

IN PLANNING

- Parks Fields & Trails 2 year report
- ECGRA Playbook
- Roadshow Tours



ECGRA Communications Services Report

July 2024

Meeting with Executive Director

Ongoing Social Media Management

Ongoing Consulting

July Comms

IMPLEMENTED

40 total July posts

37 total new graphics created in July

Special Events

Media advisory and pitching

Press Event

Press release and distribution

Grant recipient graphics

2023–2024 Annual Report

ARPA report

Strategic Marketing Planning with Kate Philips and Executive Director

IN PROGRESS | 2024 Grant Releases and Graphics

2023–2024 Annual Report graphics

Community Assets – Arts, Culture, Heritage

Media advisory and pitching

Press Event

Press release and distribution

Grant recipient graphics

Holiday Graphics

Economic Impact Report rollout

Press release

PowerPoint presentation

Social media graphics

IN PLANNING

Parks Fields & Trails 2 year report

ECGRA Playbook

Roadshow Tours





Black School of Business

19th ERIE Conference

The Potential Economic Gains from Greater Equity and Inclusion

Thursday, July 25, 2024

Samuel P. "Pat" Black III Conference Center
Jack Burke Research and Economic Development Center
Penn State Erie, The Behrend College

- 8:00 – 8:30 Registration and Continental Breakfast**
- 8:30 – 8:50 Welcome Remarks**
Dr. Ralph Ford, Chancellor and Dean, Penn State Behrend
Dr. Ozgun Demirag, Interim Director and Professor of Operations & Supply Chain Management, Black School of Business, Penn State Behrend
- 8:50 – 9:00 Introduction and Conference Overview**
Dr. Kenneth Louie, Director, ERIE, Black School of Business, Penn State Behrend
- 9:00 – 9:30 The Erie Economy in 2024: Recent Trends and Future Prospects and Potential Gains from Greater Equity and Inclusion**
Dr. Kenneth Louie, Director, ERIE, Black School of Business, Penn State Behrend
- 9:30 – 10:00 Local Companies Promoting Equity and Inclusion: Strategies, Successes, & Challenges: *Ben Franklin Technology Partners and Moore Research Services, Inc.***
Mr. Brian Slawin, Director & Portfolio Manager, Northwest PA, Ben Franklin Technology Partners of Central & Northern PA
Ms. Colleen Moore Mezler, President & CEO, Moore Research Services, Inc.
- 10:00 – 10:15 Networking Break & Refreshments**
- 10:15 – 10:45 Local Companies Promoting Equity and Inclusion: Strategies, Successes & Challenges: *Erie Insurance Group***
Ms. Christine Blashock, Chief Diversity and Community Development Officer, Erie Insurance Group
- 10:45 – 12:00 Community Efforts to Foster Greater Equity and Inclusion**
Erie Racial Justice Policy Initiative (ERJPI): Mr. Art Leopold & Ms. Cheryl Rush Dix
Mr. Leopold will introduce other members of the ERJPI
Mr. Kerry L. Kirkland, Deputy Secretary for Diversity, Inclusion & Small Business Opportunities, Pennsylvania Department of General Services
Mr. Curtis Jones, Director of Government Affairs, Erie Regional Chamber & Growth Partnership
- 12:00 – 12:30 Lunch**

- 12:30 – 1:30 Lunch Panel: University Initiatives**
Dr. Ying Cao, Assistant Professor of Project & Supply Chain Management and Chair, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Committee, Black School of Business, Penn State Behrend
Dr. Greg Baker, Vice President for Mission, Mercyhurst University
Mr. Gerald James, Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Gannon University
- 1:30 – 2:30 Erie Organizations Dedicated to Advancing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**
Dr. Rhonda Matthews, Co-Founder and Chief Financial Officer, Erie's Black Wall Street
Ms. Katie Kretz, Executive Director, Multicultural Community Resource Center
Ms. Robyn Rowan, Program Manager for the Northwest Commission's APEX Accelerator
- 2:30 Event Evaluations, Wrap-Up and Adjournment**

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Links to more information on our speakers can be found here.





ERIE REGIONAL AIRPORT AUTHORITY

Erie International Airport, Tom Ridge Field

4411 West 12th Street

Erie, PA 16505

Phone: 814-833-4258

Fax: 814-83-0393

www.erieairport.org

MEDIA ADVISORY

**TO: All Media Outlets
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CONTACT: Michelle Magee
814-833-4258 ext. 256**

Press Conference

The Erie Regional Airport Authority will hold a press conference on August 7, 2024, at 10:00 am in the airport terminal baggage claim area. This will be an important announcement.

The Erie Regional Airport Authority owns and operates the Erie International Airport, Tom Ridge Field and its surrounding properties. The airport is self-sufficient and receives no local tax payer dollars.



UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 10:30AM ET, AUGUST 7, 2024

**Breeze Airways Announces New Service from Erie with Flights to Orlando
-- Airline Also Offering 35%* Off All Roundtrip Base Fares, including New Routes --**

Erie, PA (August 7, 2024) – [Breeze Airways](#), the premium leisure low-cost carrier offering affordable nonstop service across the U.S., today announced new service to Orlando from Erie, starting November 6. Erie marks Breeze’s fourth city in Pennsylvania, including Pittsburgh, Lancaster, and Wilkes-Barre/Scranton.

Breeze also is offering a system-wide 35-percent* off all roundtrip base fares if purchased by August 9, 2024 (11:59 pm PT), for travel from August 28, 2024 thru February 4, 2025 and from April 28 thru May 13, 2025, if Guests use the promo code ‘TAKEOFF’ at checkout on flybreeze.com or on the Breeze app.

From Erie, PA to:

- Orlando, FL (Wednesdays and Saturdays, starting November 6).

“The Erie Regional Airport Authority and community are excited about the new low-cost travel options offered by Breeze Airways, stated Derek Martin, Executive Director. Martin added, “Breeze Airways will bring their nice, nicer, nicest (Breeze Ascent) product offerings to the regional community.”

“The Fly Erie Fund, LLC was created to support airlines looking to expand and to enhance air travel options for our community’s residents,” said Jake Rouch, President & CEO, of the Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership. “Through the support of public and

private partners, the Fly Erie Fund, LLC was able to enhance Breeze's confidence in bringing their world-class service to Erie. We are excited to welcome Breeze to Erie."

"We have continued to see opportunities for growth in Pennsylvania, and Erie is a great example of a market with a large community but limited air service," said David Neeleman, Breeze Airways' Founder and CEO. "We're excited to enter Erie in November with a great destination in Orlando, including many family-friendly activities. Breeze is all about more affordable, yet elevated travel options, and that's what we'll be bringing to Erie."

Breeze, which was recently ranked in the top five of Travel + Leisure's "Best Domestic Airlines" for the third year in a row, began selling service from just 16 cities in May 2021. Since then, the airline has seen tremendous demand for its unique "premium leisure" model that marries efficiency and affordability with comfort and accessibility.

Coupled with an elevated experience featuring premium seating options and high-speed WiFi on its fleet of brand-new Airbus A220-300 aircraft, Breeze is defining what it means to be "Seriously Nice" in an industry that has been anything but. Breeze offers both bundled and a la carte options so travelers can customize an experience that fits their needs. Breeze's fare bundles feature full flexibility along with other add-ons such as bags, seats, and inflight WiFi.

Breeze doesn't charge change or cancellation fees up to 60 minutes prior to departure and offers other benefits such as free family seating and a la carte pricing. With seamless booking, no change or cancellation fees, up to 24-months of reusable flight credit and customized flight features delivered via a sleek and simple app, Breeze makes it easy to buy and easy to fly. Learn more about Breeze's [flight offerings](#) via our site or the app.

###

*35% base fare discount applies only to new reservations for round-trip flights with promo code TAKEOFF. Supply is limited, and no advance purchase requirement applies. Promotion must be purchased at flybreeze.com or on the Breeze app by August 9, 2024 (11:59 pm PT), for travel from August 28, 2024 thru February 4, 2025 and from April 28 thru May 13, 2025. New routes BDL-DAB,

DAB-RDU, DAB-PVD, BDL-ILM, ILM-MCO, ILM-PVD, ILM-RSW, RSW-SBN will only be valid for the promo from 4/28 to 5/13. Blackout dates include: 11/20-11/27, 11/29-12/3, 12/23-12/24, and 12/26-1/5. Travel must be flown on qualifying travel dates for discount to be applied in full. The discount will apply only to flights on qualifying travel dates. All fare rules will apply. Certain flights and/or days of travel may be unavailable. Fare prices, fare classes, rules, routes, and schedules are subject to change or exemption without notice. Cannot be combined with any other offer. Any changes or modifications to qualifying promotional reservations will be subject to fare repricing. A difference in airfare at the current fare price may apply. Offer not valid on group bookings. Other restrictions and blackout dates may apply.

BREEZE B-ROLL FOR BROADCAST MEDIA:

<http://bit.ly/breeze-b-roll>

Other Breeze Press Releases and Information:

<https://www.flybreeze.com/news>

About Breeze Airways

Breeze Airways began service in May 2021 and has been ranked as one of the U.S.' best domestic airlines for the last three years by *Travel + Leisure* magazine's World's Best Awards and was awarded "Best Seat Comfort in North America" in June 2024 by the Airline Passenger Experience Association (APEX). Breeze offers a mix of more than 200 year-round and seasonal nonstop routes between 64 cities in 30 states. Founded by aviation entrepreneur David Neeleman, Breeze operates a fleet of Embraer 190/195 and Airbus A220-300 aircraft, with a focus on providing efficient and affordable flights between secondary airports, bypassing hubs for shorter travel times. With seamless booking, no change or cancellation fees, up to 24-months of reusable flight credit and customized flight features – including complimentary family seating - delivered via a sleek and simple app, Breeze makes it easy to buy and easy to fly. Learn more about Breeze's [flight offerings](#) via our site or the app.

Media Contact:

Gareth Edmondson-Jones

Breeze Airways

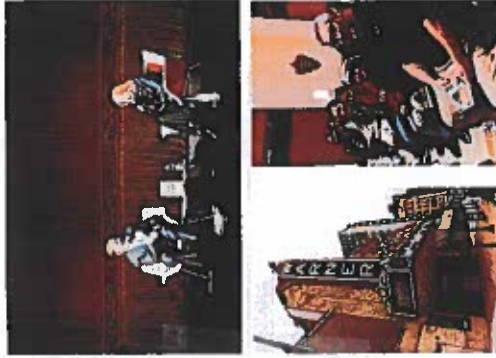
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Gareth.EdmondsonJones@FlyBreeze.com



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To our Friends at ECGRA

Thank you for sponsoring the 2024 Erie County Bar Association Law Day Celebration. Your support and partnership played a key role in the success of the event and is very much appreciated!

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Pa. auditor general to audit ECGRA

A.J. Rao

Erie Times-News

USA TODAY NETWORK

The state Auditor General's office will look over two years of activities conducted by the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority as part of a performance audit.

In a letter Wednesday to ECGRA leadership, Auditor General Tim DeFoor stated the audit will cover the period from April 1, 2022, through March 31.

The audit, DeFoor stated, will seek to determine whether ECGRA complied with gaming legislation and whether expenditures of gaming funds were properly disclosed to the public.

ECGRA, which was founded in 2008, serves as a driver of economic development in Erie County, awarding grants funded by gaming revenue dollars to small businesses, nonprofits and municipalities throughout the year.

While ECGRA undergoes an annual audit by independent accounting firm Maher Duessel, this will be the first time ECGRA is audited by the state.

'We're looking forward to working with the auditor general in resolving any questions that may be lingering,' ECGRA Solicitor Tim Wachter said. 'ECGRA is not concerned about the audit in any way. We have one of the most transparent operations in all of Erie County government.'

What will be audited?

The audit outlines two objectives.

The first is to determine whether ECGRA complied with the law, namely:

- The Economic Development Financing Law;

- the Pennsylvania Horse Race Development and Gaming Act, which legalized gaming in the state;
- the 2008 ordinance that Erie County Council passed to create ECGRA; and
- the 2010 settlement agreement that enshrined the flow of dollars from ECGRA to six contiguous municipalities that host and surround Presque Isle Downs and Casino.

The second objective is to determine whether expenditures of ECGRA's local share funds were disclosed on its website and that funds didn't go toward tuition or educational expenses of an ECGRA employee.

DeFoor indicated that objectives might be added and the scope of the audit adjusted.

Why is ECGRA being audited?

The state audit was requested by state Sen. Dan Laughlin, Erie County Executive Brenton Davis and a slate of state lawmakers.

In a Feb. 1 letter to ECGRA, the group stated they were compelled to request the audit because of 'collective concern regarding information we have received' about ECGRA's financial practices.

The letter didn't specify what 'information' was received. However, it cited an example of how 'reports of the uses of (gaming) funds' were not being reported on the ECGRA website or any public forum as required by state gaming laws.

Wachter informed the ECGRA board in a Feb. 6 memo that Laughlin had contacted his office about the matter and that ECGRA addressed the issue within a day.

The letter, which was sent by Laughlin's office, was signed by Davis, along with Republican state Sen. Scott Hutchinson; Democratic state Reps. Pat Harkins and Bob Merski; and Republican state Reps. Jake Banta and Brad Roae.

DeFoor's audit comes after months of criticism from Davis of ECGRA.

Earlier this year, Davis took aim at ECGRA for its operating costs and executive director's salary; rebuked it in the news media as a 'slush fund of walking-around money;' and floated the idea of

dissolving the ECGRA board altogether, placing all gaming revenue funding decisions squarely in the hands of county government.

He requested an exhaustive list of financial information from the authority and, along with Laughlin, requested the authority board to refrain from any long-term obligations, such as renewing ECGRA Executive Director Perry Wood's contract, until the state audit was done.

ECGRA leaders accused Davis of interfering in the affairs of an independent authority and making accusations against ECGRA with no evidence. ECGRA chose not to refrain from any business, including the renewal of Wood's contract. The authority has also bolstered its financial disclosures online.

On Friday, Erie County Public Information Officer Chris Carroll stated the county executive didn't want to comment on DeFoor's audit until the audit was complete.

When is the audit?

The Auditor General's Office and ECGRA are expected to hold an entrance conference before Aug. 7.

An entrance conference is an opportunity for the auditor and client to meet and discuss audit objectives, schedules and instructions in greater detail.

Wood will be the audit liaison for ECGRA and, along with Wachter, will be communicating with DeFoor's office.

A.J. Rao can be reached at arao@gannett.com. Follow him on X @ETNRao.

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U.S. NEWS

Pennsylvania casinos ask court to force state to tax skill games found in stores equally to slots



FILE - People play slot machines at Philadelphia Park Casino and Racetrack, June 25, 2007, in Bensalem, Pa. The owners of twelve Pennsylvania casinos have asked the state's highest court to declare that a tax on slot machine revenue is unconstitutional because the state doesn't impose it broadly on cash-paying electronic game terminals known as skill games that can be found in many bars and stores. (AP Photo/Mel Ev [Read More](#))



BY **MARC LEVY**

Updated 5:01 PM EDT, July 30, 2024

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — The owners of twelve Pennsylvania casinos have asked the state's highest court to declare that a tax on slot machine revenue is unconstitutional because the state doesn't impose it broadly on cash-paying electronic game terminals known as skill games that can be found in many bars and stores.

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The lawsuit, filed Monday, could endanger more than **\$1 billion** in annual tax revenue that goes toward property tax rebates and economic development projects.

The state's collection of the roughly 54% tax on casinos' revenue from slot machines, but not on revenue from skill game terminals, violates constitutional guarantees designed to ensure that taxation is fair, the casino owners contend.

"There is no basis for requiring licensed entities to pay about half of their slot machine revenue to the Commonwealth while allowing unlicensed entities to pay no tax on such revenue," they argue in the lawsuit.

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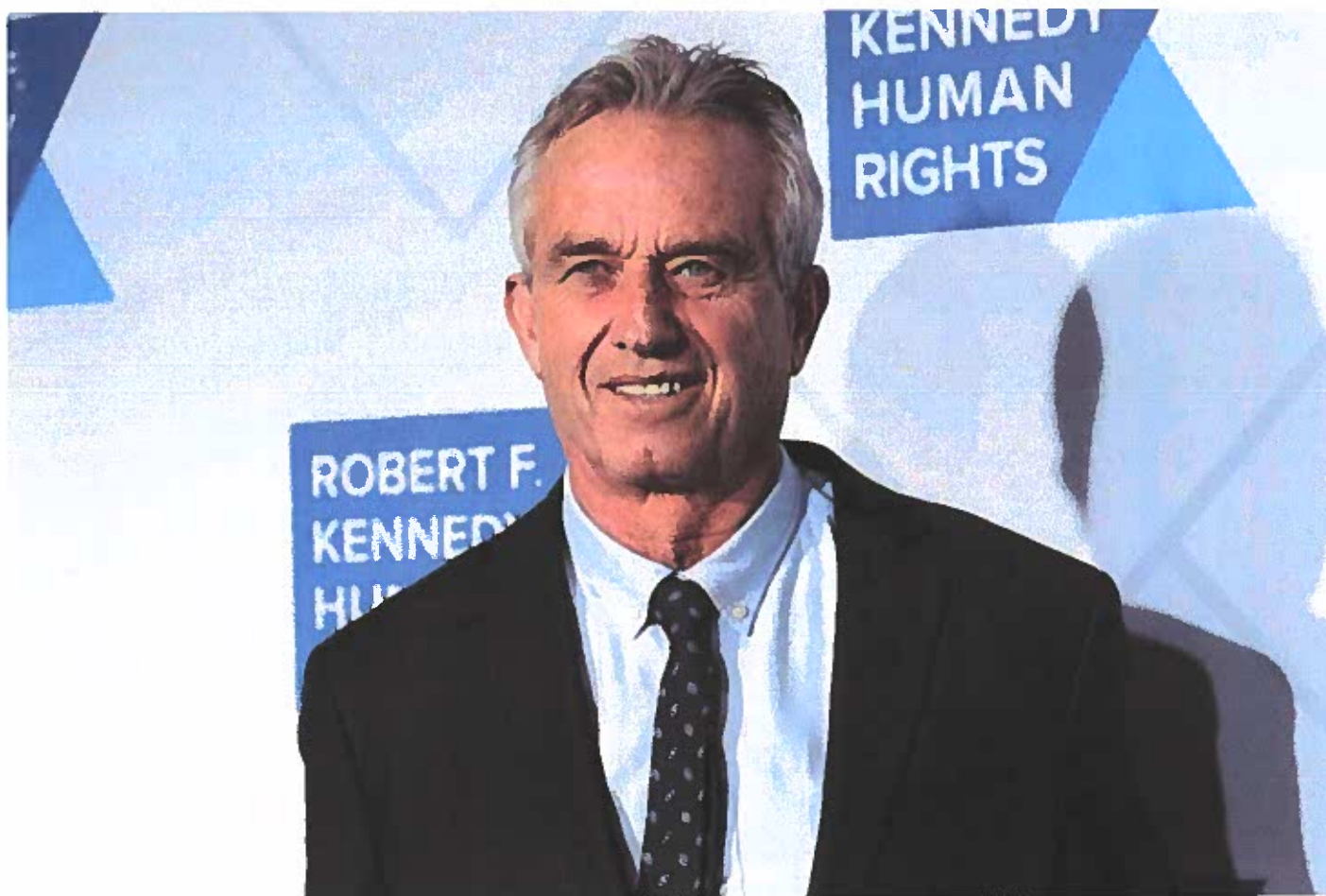
EVEN WHEN THE NEWS IS FREE, JOURNALISM IS NOT.
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The lawsuit asks the court to force the state to apply the same tax rate to skill games or to bar it from collecting taxes on slot machines.

The casinos' owners include dozens of principals, as well as major casino companies such as Caesars Entertainment Inc. and Penn Entertainment Inc.

RELATED COVERAGE



Legal challenge seeks to prevent RFK Jr. from appearing on Pennsylvania's presidential ballot



Harris-Walz vs. Trump-Vance: It's now an expanded battle for both the Sun Belt and Rust Belt

The state Department of Revenue declined comment on the lawsuit. The Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board said it had just learned of lawsuit and was evaluating it.

Pennsylvania brings in more tax revenue from casinos than any other state, according to American Gaming Association figures.

The fate of the lawsuit, filed by the owners of 12 of the state's 17 licensed and operating casinos, is likely tied to the outcome of a [separate lawsuit](#) that the state Supreme Court is considering.

That case — between the state attorney general's office and Pace-O-Matic Inc., a maker of skill games — could decide whether the skill games that have become commonplace in nonprofit clubs, convenience stores, bars and elsewhere are unlicensed gambling machines and, as a result, must be shut down.

A lower court found that the Pace-O-Matic games are based on a player's ability and not solely on chance, like slot machines and other traditional gambling games that are regulated by the state.

For years, the state has maintained that the devices are unlicensed gambling machines that are operating illegally and subject to seizure by police. Machine makers, distributors and retailers contend that they are legal, if unregulated, games that are not subject to state gambling control laws.

Lawmakers have long discussed regulating and taxing the devices, but any agreement has been elusive.

It's unclear exactly how many skill game terminals there are in Pennsylvania, but the American Gaming Association estimates there are at least 67,000, which would be more than any other state.

Casinos operate roughly 25,000 regulated slot machines on which gamblers wagered almost \$32 billion last year and lost just over \$2.4 billion. The state and casinos effectively split that amount.

Follow Marc Levy at www.twitter.com/timelywriter.