



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **As Students Head Back to School, an Historic Source of Education Funding Continues to Provide**

**Yonkers, New York** – As New York’s 2.7 million students head back to their classrooms, they’ve got school supplies and homework on their minds. It’s unlikely anyone in the state, from Allegany to Suffolk counties, is thinking about the downstate destination that continues to fund New York’s education coffers.

Similarly, fall means football to many. And while football fans across the state know the Rooney name from the legendary Pittsburgh Steelers, few likely know it is the investment of Tim Rooney, son of Steelers founder Art J. Rooney, Sr., they can credit for generating nearly \$25 million a month for New York State’s schools. Tim Rooney owns and operates Empire City Casino at Yonkers Raceway in Westchester County.

The famed Yonkers Raceway opened in 1899 as Empire City Race Track. Rooney and his brothers purchased the harness track in 1972 during its heyday when trotters and pacers brought 30,000 fans to the historic track. The track was a hot spot not only for the country’s best racing, with champion thoroughbred racehorse Seabiscut racing there five times in the 1930s, but also scores of celebrity visits, including Ed Sullivan who was a regular visitor in the 60s, entertainer Cab Calloway, golfing great Jack Nicklaus, and President Jimmy Carter.

When New York State law allowed racetracks to install video lottery terminals (VLTs), commonly known as slot machines, Rooney invested nearly \$300 million and transformed the historic track into a Las Vegas-style casino, re-opening it as Empire City Casino in October 2006. Today it attracts over 8 million visitors a year, celebrities Harry Connick, Jr. and Paula Dean among them.

The property has been lucrative for New York. The state collects nearly 70 percent of Empire City’s net win (funds remaining after payout of prizes) with 50 percent allocated directly to education. That’s significantly higher than tax rates paid by casinos in Atlantic City and Las Vegas. According to the Nevada Gaming Control Board, Nevada casinos are taxed at a rate of 7.75 percent. New Jersey Division of Gaming Enforcement indicates that in 2013 the tax rate for its casinos was raised to 15 percent from the previous 8 percent.

In the month of August alone, Empire City generated nearly \$25 million for education, enough to fund the annual education of 1,344 New York students. The amount represents nearly a third of the \$76 million generated for education that month by the nine existing racinos statewide.

Comparatively, the most recent numbers available show Nevada collected approximately \$57 million in the month of July from all of its casinos statewide. In the month of June, New Jersey casinos generated \$16.5 million in tax revenue for the state.

*“We continue to increase awareness about our exciting gaming, entertainment and dining offerings,” said Rooney. “Residents from New York and across the tri-state area are enjoying gaming entertainment closer to home and that directly benefits our teachers, students and residents.”*

In fiscal year 2014/2015, the state’s education coffers received over \$273 million from Empire City, and since opening its doors as a casino, the single property has generated nearly \$2.4 billion for New York schools to date.

Empire City Casino at Yonkers Raceway, 810 Yonkers Avenue, Yonkers, New York 10704 914-968-4200



Sounds like a smart bet for New York.

***About Empire City Casino at Yonkers Raceway:***

Empire City Casino, one of the largest entertainment and gaming destinations in the northeast, features 5,300 of the hottest slots, electronic blackjack craps, roulette, baccarat and sic bo; year-round harness racing & International simulcasting; live entertainment including the best party, tribute and Latin bands, comedy, & more. A plethora of dining options will satisfy even the most discerning palate with Italian cuisine at *Nonno's Trattoria*; trackside dining with live betting at *Empire Terrace Restaurant*; and convenient delicious options at the International Food Court or Lil' Cocina. A new \$50 million expansion added *Dan Rooney's*, a high-energy sports bar, and *Alley 810*, a craft cocktail lounge rounds out the entertainment options with retro bowling lanes. Empire City Casino at Yonkers Raceway is located at 810 Yonkers Avenue (off I-87 at Central Avenue) Yonkers, NY, Westchester County, open seven days a week from 10:00am to 6:00am. Visit [www.empirecitycasino.com](http://www.empirecitycasino.com) or call 914.968.4200 for information.

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