



MichGO stay granted hours before deadline

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A last minute appeal by political action group MichGO will further delay the Gun Lake Tribe's plans build the Gun Lake Casino.

United States District Court Judge John Garrett Penn granted MichGO a stay pending appeal, just hours before the Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawattomi expected the federal government to place their land into trust at 5 p.m. March 5.

MichGO filed the lawsuit in opposition of the Department of the Interior's May 5, 2006 decision to take the land into trust. Having the land place into trust is one of the required steps for moving ahead with the casino project.

On Feb. 24, Penn ruled that there were no facts to support issues raised in MichGO's challenge.

"MichGO has only temporarily prevailed in further delaying economic relief to the tribe, and thousands of West Michigan residents," said Tribal Spokesman, James Nye.

In reviewing the "extensive record in this case," a, "historically oppressed tribe, has suffered, and will continue to suffer, every day that the litigation continues," Penn said. However, "the guiding principals of fairness" dictate that the court grant the stay pending an appeal, Penn said. The court is "very aware of the competing interest in this case," Penn said.

The controversial parcel is the 146-acre site formerly occupied by AMPRO, near U.S. 131, in Wayland Township.

The tribe plans on offering Class III Las Vegas-style gaming, with slot machines, gaming tables, and amenities with entertainment and dining.

"On one hand, there is a tribe saddled with staggering rates of unemployment," Penn said. "On the other, there are many homeowners who fear that the introduction of a casino in their community will cause irreparable harm."

MichGO, and anti-Gun Lake Casino group 23 is Enough claim that casinos contribute to an increase in gambling addiction, crime, suicide and other social ills.

23 is Enough Chairman Mike Jandernoa is urging lawmakers to oppose any new Class III compacts, and "stand up to the tribe's brazen threats, and an overreaching federal government" in order to "protect state's rights."

Jandernoa advocates the renegotiation of existing tribes in order to capture "the more than \$2 million owed to the state, and increasing revenue sharing payments to state and local governments."

Michigan gaming laws need to be reformed to provide increased oversight and control over tribal casino operations, Jandernoa said.

Despite casino opposition, members of the tribe remain patient and confident that they will prevail.

"MichGO is essentially alone in this shallow, temporary delay in economic progress," Nye said. "Congress and the U.S. Supreme Court have determined that federally recognized tribes have a right to conduct gaming. The inherent sovereign rights of tribal governments are recognized in the U.S. Constitution. It is

inevitable that the tribe will get trust land and open a Class III gaming facility."

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