



House approves casino compact with Gun Lake tribe

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LANSING, Mich. (AP) — A deal that would give the state a slice of the revenue from a planned American Indian casino in southwestern Michigan was approved Wednesday by the state House.

The resolution, passed 63-41 in the Democrat-led House, approves a compact negotiated by Gov. Jennifer Granholm and the Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians, also known as the Gun Lake tribe.

The resolution also must be approved by the Republican-led Senate.

The tribe plans to build a casino in Allegan County's Wayland Township, about 20 miles south of Grand Rapids. It would employ about 1,800 people and have about 2,500 electronic gambling machines and 80 gaming tables.

The casino has been in the works for several years.

"The compact is the only way the state is going to secure important regulatory agreements," negotiated in the pact, said James Nye, a Lansing-based spokesman for the Gun Lake tribe.

The tribe and Granholm signed the compact earlier this year.

Under the compact, the state would receive 8 percent of the casino's take from slot machines for the first \$150 million. The state would get 10 percent or more of the revenue from slot revenue above that amount. Tribal officials calculate the state would get about \$15 million from the casino in its first full year of operation, while local governments would get another \$3 million.

The Gun Lake compact would require gamblers to be 21 or older. Compacts with other tribes that operate Michigan casinos set the age limit at 18.

States often seek compacts with tribes to gain some regulatory authority and generate revenue for the state treasury. Without a compact, states risk missing out on revenue from casinos that the federal government would allow to open anyway.

In return, compacts offer tribes a measure of territorial protection from state-authorized gambling competition and may expedite the process of opening new casinos. In some cases, compacts also foster cooperation between tribes and surrounding local and state governments.

"The question is, do we want to have a say in this casino, or do we want to have no control and no say and no revenue," said Rep. Barbara Farrah, a Democrat from Southgate and sponsor of the resolution that passed the House.

An Allegan County lawmaker spoke in opposition to the casino.

"The majority of the people in my district don't want this," said Rep. Fulton Sheen, a Republican from Plainwell.

There are 18 tribal casinos in Michigan and three Detroit casinos. At least two other tribal casinos are in the planning stages.

Several of the tribal casinos no longer have compacts attached to them. Some were suspended when the state allowed non-tribal casinos to open in Detroit in the late 1990s. Some other tribes stopped making payments to the state in 2003 because of a dispute over the Lottery starting a game called Club Keno. The tribes said that game violated their compacts with the state.

On the Net:

Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomí Indians: <http://www.mbpi.org>

Michigan Gambling Opposition: <http://www.michgo.com>

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