

Legislators reject bill to build casinos

A bill that proposed opening casinos on Taiwan's outlying islands with the consent of the majority of the island's residents failed to clear the legislative floor yesterday.

The bill was an amendment to an act regarding the development of the outlying islands. It did not carry enough votes to pass, as 84 of the 149 legislators who were present voted against it, while only 57 voted in favor and eight abstained.

The Non-Partisan Solidarity Union bill proposed that the central government be allowed to grant permits to international tourist hotels and operate casinos and other gambling ventures if a majority of the residents on Kinmen, Matsu and Penghu islands consented to having such establishments on their land. The bill was aimed at rekindling tourism in the area.

The Criminal Code of Taiwan prohibits gambling and has set disciplinary measures for those that do not uphold public order and good customs.

Opposition Kuomintang legislative whip Kuo Su-chun said that many KMT legislators had been afraid of being seen as „supporting organized crime and corruption“ if they voted in support of the NPSU-proposed gambling clause. KMT Legislator Wu Yu-Sheng said that even though KMT presidential candidate Ma Ying-jeou agreed that the gambling industry would benefit the outlying islands, Ma had not actually said that the amendment should be passed during this year's legislative session. Wu added that even if the gambling clause had passed during this year's session, the Cabinet might still refuse to enforce the clause, which would put pressure on the KMT.

Penghu's government had supported the bill, while NPSU

lawmakers had hoped that it might pass today, before the Legislature adjourns for the year.