

Official sues state AG over tribal casino liquor sales

Patrick Devlin, a lawyer and employee of the Michigan Gaming Control Board, has sued Michigan Attorney General Mike Cox in an effort to force him to require the state's 19 tribal casinos to obtain liquor licenses.

Devlin, who until Monday monitored tribal casinos for the gaming control board, has pressed state officials, including the attorney general's office, for at least four years to address his concerns that the state should be regulating liquor sales in the casinos.

Devlin, who is now a regulation officer assigned to Detroit's three casinos, filed his suit Tuesday in Ingham County Circuit Court. A spokesman for Cox was not available immediately for comment.

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„The office has not seen the complaint yet, so I am not able to comment,“ said Cox spokesman Rusty Hills.

Detroit's commercial casinos, retailers and bars across Michigan must obtain liquor licenses, and Devlin said not requiring the tribal casinos to be licensed gives them a competitive advantage.

“Bars, restaurants and even the Detroit commercial casinos incur expenses for applying for and obtaining a liquor license and supplying liquor liability insurance or a bond,“ Devlin said in a statement. “They are also subject to frequent law enforcement checks and stings, and must pay fines and face license suspensions or revocations and the costs associated therewith if they violate the law. Tribal casinos incur none of these costs or sanctions.”

Devlin called Cox a "deadbeat" when it comes to enforcement action against the tribes.

"While the attorney general has 'zero tolerance' for all kinds of conduct, he apparently has 'unlimited tolerance' for tribal casino violations: he just gives them a free pass," Devlin said.

Devlin said one tribal casino had not been audited by the state for nine years, and Cox did little to force it to turn over operating records to the state for inspection. While Michigan does not regulate the tribal casinos, it monitors casino payments to local communities. Those payments are required under the tribes' gaming agreements with the state.