

The US House Rejects Plans for Local Casinos

Detroit (WWJ) – The House has soundly rejected legislation that would pave the way for two proposed Indian casinos in Michigan. Opponents said it would circumvent gambling laws.

The bill led a clash among several Michigan lawmakers, gambling opponents and those trying to bring jobs to the state, which has one of the nation's highest unemployment rates. It was defeated on a vote of 298-121.

The Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians and the Bay Mills Indian Community reached agreements in 2002 with Michigan officials to take land in Romulus and Port Huron, respectively, and build off-reservation casinos.

The bill would have given the land to house the two new casinos in exchange for settling 110 acres of land claims near Charlotte Beach in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Only Congress has the authority to settle land claims.

Politicians from both sides of the issue argued in favor and against casinos opening in Romulus and Port Huron. Meantime, a new report from Detroit's Joint Employment and Procurement Advisory Board predicted that the new casinos would have a devastating impact on Detroit.

WWJ Newsradio 950's Florence Walton spoke with Detroit City Councilman Kwame Kenyatta : „Any new casinos in the area would impact the revenue stream that we have from our casinos here in the city of Detroit,“ Kenyatta said. „So that is a great concern,“ he said.

Those trying to bring the casino to Romulus don't agree that it would cut tax revenues from Detroit casinos by more than 40 percent, as the report predicts.

Jake Miclocjik is president of Michigan Consultants, a company working for the Romulus casino. He told WWJ's Beth Fisher that it wouldn't take huge numbers away from Detroit casinos.

„It's a net gain for the county as a whole.“ Miclocjik said. „There is some overlap – it is relatively small. Maybe three, four, five percent of their business might go over to somewhere else. This is business they might lose to Battle Creek anyways,“ he said.

Miklojcik said a new casino in Romulus would create about 3,000 jobs, something that would help Detroit and the region.