

# New Jersey Supreme Court backs revoking of Tropicana casino license

The former owners of the Tropicana Casino & Resort „lacked financial integrity and responsibility, as well as business ability,“ and deserved to be stripped of their casino license, the New Jersey Supreme Court ruled unanimously last week.

The decision, coming just eight days after the court heard oral arguments in the case, clears the way for a state-appointed trustee to sell the troubled gambling hall in a Bankruptcy Court auction.

Tropicana Entertainment L.L.C. had appealed the license denial to the Supreme Court, alleging, among other things, political interference by State Senate President Dick Codey. He wrote a letter to the Casino Control Commission urging that a union representing casino workers be allowed to participate in the renewal hearings. The letter did not ask for a specific outcome regarding the Tropicana's license.

The commission denied the request and said it would not consider Codey's letter in its decision. The justices found many reasons to support the commission's decision to deny the Tropicana a license.

The former owners cut nearly 1,000 jobs, leading to problems with cleanliness, service, and compliance with state gambling regulations. Casino Commission chairwoman Linda Kassekert welcomed the decision. „It reinforces our position that the decision was clearly based on the record developed before us, and not on any external factors,“ she said.

Scott Butera, CEO of Tropicana Entertainment, was not surprised by the ruling. „We kind of knew it was a long shot,“

he said, adding that an appeal to the US Supreme Court was unlikely. He said the company remained committed to other efforts to regain control of the casino, including a petition it has filed with the Casino Commission.

The casino has remained open since the license denial, under the supervision of a trustee, retired state Supreme Court Justice Gary Stein. Interim management has made strides toward improving conditions at the casino and hotel, including hiring back about 150 of the customer-service workers that previous management had laid off.

The decision removes the main obstacle to Stein's efforts to find a new owner for the Tropicana, as required by law. He has selected Baltimore-based Cordish Co. as a potential purchaser for the casino in a Bankruptcy Court auction.