

Oversight chair seeks delay in awarding resort casino license - Standard Speaker

Written by Administrator

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HARRISBURG - The likely chairman of a House oversight committee wants to delay awarding Pennsylvania's resort casino license, suggesting a new assertiveness on casino issues by the legislative branch in the next session.

The state Gaming Control Board has scheduled Jan. 6 as the date for voting on four applicants for the remaining license for a resort casino

that can have up to 600 slot machines and 50 table games.

The applicants are Fernwood Hotel & Resort, Bushkill; Nemacolin Woodlands Resort in southwestern Pennsylvania; Penn National Gaming for a casino featuring an "RV World" west of Harrisburg, and Mason-Dixon Resort and Casino in Gettysburg.

But Rep. Curt Schroder, R-155, Exton, who is expected to take the reins of the Gaming Oversight Committee, has called on the gaming board to postpone the license award because terms expire next month for four members of the seven-member gaming board.

"An award made 'on the way out the door' and left entirely to subsequent appointees to implement does not serve the public interest," Schroder wrote. "Waiting an additional month or two until new members are appointed and educated on each applicants will ensure confidence that the board is making the best decision."

Schroder said Monday that he has the same qualms about lame-duck lawmakers voting on bills.

The two-year term of gaming board member Raymond Angeli, president of Lackawanna College, expires Jan. 20. Angeli is an appointee of former Senate Democratic floor leader Robert Mellow, D-22, Peckville, but he can be appointed to another term by Mellow's successor in leadership, Sen. Jay Costa, D-43, Pittsburgh.

The terms of original board members Kenneth McCabe and Jeffrey Coy both expire, but they can't be reappointed because of term limits. The two-year term of member Gary Sojka expires too, but he can be reappointed by new House Majority Leader Mike Turzai, R-28, Pittsburgh.

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The Jan. 6 meeting date is still on, and the board has a number of options it can take regarding a license decision, gaming board spokesman Richard McGarvey said Monday. One option could be postponing a vote.

Schroder served as ranking Republican on the gaming oversight panel during the previous legislative session. Now as a majority party chairman, he would wield power over what bills are voted on and the scheduling of public hearings on gambling issues.

Schroder is among a group of GOP lawmakers who have been critical of the gaming board dating back to the controversy over the handling of investigative information prior to the 2006 award of the Mount Airy Casino Resort license to Dunmore businessman Louis DeNaples.

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