

Impact of Proposed Casino Tax Hike on Local Community Services - KCRG

Written by Administrator
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CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa - Governor Branstad says raising the tax on Iowa Casinos will bring in 200 million dollars to the state.

What does this mean for local groups that rely on gaming grants to fund community services?

One volunteer fire department in Bremer County says they'll pay the price.

Two years ago the Denver Fire Department started

applying for grants from the Black Hawk County Gaming Association. A program using money from casinos to fund community services

"We're unfortunately getting to the point to where we have to rely on outside funding like this because tax dollars are getting harder to come by," said Mark Richmann, a firefighter and the department's Director of Funding. Richmann says they recently received a 27,000 dollar check from the gaming association to buy uniforms that are up to code. The old jackets were outdated and needed to be replaced.

The new jackets comply with federal regulations withstanding twice the heat and come with a strap to pull a firefighter to safety. The funding director says his crew budgeted this purchase out over seven years. The grant from the gaming association allowed them to purchase 24 jackets this year and put extra money aside to buy a new fire truck.

"That's one of the benefits of such a grant," said Richmann. "We don't have to go back to the tax payers and raise their taxes to get funding we need to operate."

If the fifty percent tax increase on Iowa Casinos is approved, the Black Hawk County Gaming Association says they'll be forced to decrease funding to the seven counties that apply for the grants. This means The Denver Fire Department may need to reach back into their budgets or back out to the community for help in the future.

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