

Assembly committee hears pros and cons of Sullivan Indian casino - Mid-Hudson News

Written by Administrator
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ALBANY – If the Wisconsin Stockbridge-Munsee Native American tribe is permitted to build a full scale casino and resort in Sullivan County, it would be “lights out” for Monticello Casino and Raceway, Empire Resorts’ CEO Joseph D’Amato told a State Assembly gaming committee hearing Wednesday.

D’Amato and Executive Vice President Charles Degliomini addressed

the hearing saying their operation currently contributes \$318.7 million annually to the state, harness horsemen purses, payroll, local municipalities and sales and use taxes.

Stockbridge Munsee Tribe President Kimberly Vele told the committee that she was not there to renegotiate their agreements with the state. “We have negotiated in good faith” over the course of years, she said.

Degliomini, meanwhile, said the Stockbridge-Munsee compact was signed by the state without even “an elementary review and analysis of the unique consequences to our business, never mind the overall impact to the New York State casino and raceway business in general.”

Degliomini countered the tribe’s contention that both could compete as casinos do in Las Vegas.

“This might be very easy for the Stockbridge Tribe and their supporters to say, but no single casino in Las Vegas has such a one sided competitive advantage that makes it impossible for their neighboring casinos to compete. They all have the same tax rate. The Nevada government does not pick winners and losers in Las Vegas; it allows each casino to compete on a level playing field, but in New York, the opposite seems true.”

Monticello Casino and Raceway is only allowed to offer video gaming while the Indian casino would have the full gamut of gaming.

Also testifying at the hearing was Todd Diorio, speaking for the Catskill Casino Coalition and

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the Hudson Valley Building Trades Council.

He testified about the high unemployment level in Sullivan County and said some 10,000 construction jobs would be created. "We can't afford another roadblock with this casino," he said.

Sullivan County officials also testified via written comments. "The Stockbridge project is an opportunity not only to create thousands of jobs, but to re-energize a once vital industry, tourism, in an economically impoverished county," said Allan Scott, president of the Sullivan County Partnership for Economic Development.

County Manager David Fanslau told the hearing that what is at stake is reestablishing and rebuilding the county's tourism industry. "By rebuilding our hotel and resort industry we can rebuild our middle class," he said. "The casino gaming is a vital part of rebuilding our tourism industry, because it will allow the resorts first to be built and second compete in a marketplace with our neighboring states." He said hundreds of millions of dollars leave New York every year to Connecticut, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Canada.

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