

Got your veto pen ready, Gov. Quinn? Illinois legislators are playing 'Casino Surprise!'

Written by Administrator
Thursday, 30 May 2013 12:58 -

With state legislators flailing toward Friday's scheduled adjournment, sponsors of a bill that would more than double the number of Illinois casinos are playing their favorite game. No, not slots or video poker. They're playing an Illinois bastardization of hide-the-pea. Call it "Casino Surprise!"

That probably means the sponsors, and the lobbyists who dangle them from little strings, couldn't muster enough House votes to pass a huge bill the Senate already has approved. Their new gambit evidently is to say as little as possible about how the bill is being rewritten — somewhere unknown, by someone unknown — so it can be sprung on lawmakers before the session ends. If a bill gets through the House and senators agree to this mysterious new version, it would go to Gov. Pat Quinn.

Quinn correctly vetoed 2011 and 2012 casino bills — largely because of their intentionally slippery ethics provisions — and may need to kill a 2013 bill as well.

Wednesday morning we watched the bill's chief sponsor in the House, state Rep. Bob Rita, avoid explaining what provisions his new bill language will include. Rita spoke reassuringly of how the rejiggered bill would retain its previous "framework," without defining framework. But he did not want to talk specifics. And it's the specifics that ought to frighten every Illinoisan.

When last we saw this monstrosity, with its expansion from 10 Illinois casinos to 23, it included three Chicago-owned casinos, with one at each of the city's airports. We're fine with Chicago owning casinos and hiring one or more experienced gambling companies to operate them.

But the notion of Chicago's City Hall having *any* regulatory oversight of a casino owned by, um, Chicago's City Hall is unthinkable.

Specifically: Lawmakers and the governor ought to refuse any legislation that diverts any regulatory responsibilities customarily held by the Illinois Gaming Board to a Chicago Casino Development Authority that answers to City Hall. Imagine the possibilities.

Got your veto pen ready, Gov. Quinn? Illinois legislators are playing 'Casino Surprise!'

Written by Administrator
Thursday, 30 May 2013 12:58 -

You get the picture: The sponsors of this legislation don't want the rest of us to see ... this legislation. So they divert attention from the fact that they have no bill to tangential controversies, invented if necessary: *Look at this shiny object over here!*

That's their privilege. But giving Chicago's City Hall regulatory oversight of a Chicago casino is *not* their privilege. If a bill includes any such provision, other legislators or the governor need to kill it.

The sponsors could have resolved all these questions by simply delivering their new language to legislators by now. That they didn't speaks volumes. Lawmakers, if you can't read a bill this huge, on an issue this controversial, with enough advance time to understand its innermost risks, then you shouldn't be voting for it.

And as you weigh this issue, consider:

The Gaming Board has proved that it can protect state-licensed gambling from illicit political or criminal intrusion. That is, the board has a nearly quarter-century record of keeping legalized Illinois gambling free of organized crime and other scandals that would frighten away customers and dry up the rich stream of revenue from casinos to state government.

Gov. Quinn, maybe Rita & Co. are drafting legislation with unprecedented ethical controls and no sweetheart deals that would put less Gaming Board scrutiny on Chicago casinos than other Illinois casinos now endure.

Or maybe Rita & Co. are drafting another ugly bill, not unlike those 2011 and 2012 monstrosities.

Got your veto pen ready, Governor?

Got your veto pen ready, Gov. Quinn? Illinois legislators are playing 'Casino Surprise!'

Written by Administrator

Thursday, 30 May 2013 12:58 -

Read more <http://news.google.com/news/url?sa=t&fd=R&usg=AFQjCNFvx1I5tVs6s1s6-8-uyCG3vefwJw&url=http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/editorials/ct-edit-casino-20130530,0,7123989.story>