

Deal would allow expanded gambling at tribe's Indiana casino

Written by Administrator

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SOUTH BEND, Ind. — The tribal casino in South Bend could become a full-fledged competitor to Indiana's other casinos later this year under a deal reached between state officials and the tribe.

The Four Winds South Bend Casino owned by the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi has been limited under federal law to only electronic games [since it opened in January 2018](#). The agreement finalized this past week would allow the addition of live table games such as blackjack and roulette, slot machines and sports betting.

In exchange, the Dowagiac, Michigan-based tribe would pay 8% of its slot machine winnings to the state and continue its 2% payments to the city of South Bend. That total, however, will remain far below the 25% tax rate paid last year on total winnings by Indiana's 13 state-licensed casinos.

The 20-year agreement signed by Gov. Eric Holcomb and Pokagon Chairman Matthew Wesaw still needs approval from the Indiana Legislature before it takes effect.

The tribe, which has three casinos in southwestern Michigan, asked Indiana officials in August 2019 to start negotiations on expanding its gambling options.

"The executed compact comes after many months of negotiations and hard work," said Sara Gonso Tait, the Indiana Gaming Commission's executive director. "The state team took great measures to ensure this compact complies with all state and federal laws and includes provisions permissible under federal law."

Pokagon Band officials declined to comment on their plans for the South Bend casino until after the Legislature acts, spokesman David Gutierrez said.

Provisions in the agreement would also prevent state officials from allowing new casino competition across most of northern and northwestern Indiana, including the existing casinos in

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Hammond, East Chicago, Gary and Michigan City.

The ongoing project for a [new \\$300 million on-land casino in Gary](#) would be allowed to continue, but the other three Lake Michigan casinos would be limited to building new facilities at their locations as allowed by current state law.

The agreement would only allow the Four Winds Casino to offer sports gambling at the casino, prohibiting the [statewide online sports wagering](#) that the state-regulated casinos can provide.

The tribe, which counts nearly 6,000 members, has a similar agreement with Michigan for its casinos in New Buffalo, Hartford and Dowagiac.

Read more <http://www.therepublic.com/2021/01/23/in-south-bend-casino/>