

Petersburg delegate joins senator in sponsoring casino bill for city

Written by Administrator
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RICHMOND — Echoing sentiments from her Senate counterpart that Richmond voters "had their chance," Petersburg's new state delegate has introduced the House version of Petersburg gambling referendum legislation that also would bar Richmond from re-voting on the matter for the next five years.

"Richmond had more than ample opportunity to vote on this," Del. Kim Taylor, R-Dinwiddie, said Thursday afternoon, the same day she dropped House Bill 1134. "Now it's time for Petersburg to have that same opportunity."

The freshman legislator called the possibility of a Petersburg casino "a great opportunity to bring jobs" and boost the city's economic base.

Taylor's bill is worded exactly like the one introduced Tuesday by state Sen. Joe Morrissey, D-Richmond. Both bills add Petersburg to the list of host cities for future casinos located in strategic points in southwest, central and Tidewater Virginia.

Voters in four of those cities — Bristol, Danville, Portsmouth and Norfolk — passed referendums in 2020 allowing gambling establishments to set up shop. The fifth city originally chosen was Richmond, but voters in Virginia's capital narrowly rejected the idea last November.

Both the Morrissey and Taylor legislation include language that would prohibit any city where a casino vote failed from scheduling any more re-votes for five years from the date of the rejection. Since Richmond was the only one of the original five to not pass the referendum, the bill if passed would not allow a revote until at least 2026.

That has raised the ire of Richmond City Councilor Reva Trammell, in whose district the \$571 million One Hotel and Casino complex would have been located. Trammell has introduced a local Richmond ordinance that would put the issue back before city voters this November, and has also vowed to fight passage of the Petersburg casino bill.

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Taylor said she does not expect the Richmond clause to hamper the bill's chances of passage. She said she took the temperature of other area representatives to see how they felt about the measure, and everyone supported it.

"I've been talking to people ... and the consensus is positive," she said.

Taylor said she has not heard from Trammell or any other Richmond official about the legislation, adding it would not sway her position even if she had.

"They had their chance," she said.

The day after Richmond voters rejected the casino, Morrissey [began the push](#) to bring the matter to Petersburg voters. Several casino owners and developers, including the group that would have brought the venue to Richmond, have visited Petersburg to scout out locations. Leading that list of landing spots is an area off Wagner Road in south Petersburg that is adjacent to Interstate 95.

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Wednesday's legislative opening day was a first for Taylor, who was elected last November. So

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far, Taylor said, the experience has been incredible. She likened it to a first day in college where you are busy looking for rooms and learning where to go and where to get something to eat.

"When I took my oath and then said the Pledge of Allegiance for the first time," Taylor said, "I teared up."

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