

Seneca casino revenue pact with NYS goes before Peacemakers Court

Written by Administrator

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The Seneca Nation has a deal with Albany to pay \$540 million in casino revenues to the state and, in turn, start negotiations in a new compact over gambling to replace the current deal that expires next year. But there is vocal opposition inside the Nation. Opponents expect a decision on their objections Monday from the Seneca Peacemakers Court.

While Susan Abrams remains a long-time critic of the court, she expects a fair decision from the Peacemakers on her request for a temporary restraining order against the payment. The Nation is declining any comment on the internal struggle.

The Tribal Council has agreed to the payments and appeared with Nation President Matthew Pagels to announce the deal with Albany. Calling two meetings last week, the Council heard loud opposition on both Allegany and Cattaraugus Territories.

There has been no public vote on the deal and former Tribal Council member Susan Abrams went to court, looking for a temporary restraining order against the payment, without a public vote.

Abrams said the Council has to vote to approve the deal, after Washington approves.

"That it's done legally. It's my understanding, according to letters from the Department of the Interior, the NITC investigating the matter," Abrams said. "I question whether the legality of the 25% is, in fact, legal and I think that that determination needs to be determined by those federal agencies."

The center of the agreement is continuing the Nation's gaming empire and its thousands of jobs. Abrams argues the Nation doesn't need a deal with Albany because federal legislation allows Indian gaming and states are required to deal with tribal nations on gambling.

She said this isn't just a Seneca issue, "but for Indian Country."

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