

Written by Administrator
Thursday, 02 June 2022 17:00 -

Richmond could still hold a second vote in November seeking authorization to bring a casino-resort to South Side, but the outcome appears likely to be meaningless even if a majority of those who cast ballots back the proposed \$565 million project this time around.

The General Assembly approved language Wednesday in the state budget that would bar the state's casino regulator, the Virginia Lottery, from acting for a year on any casino application the state's capital city presented.

Republican Delegate Barry D. Knight of Virginia Beach, chair of the House Appropriations Committee and lead House negotiator on the budget, disclosed that the language makes it clear that Richmond must wait until the legislature receives a report on Petersburg and the likelihood of casino success there.

Language halting Richmond from holding a referendum for a year remains in the state's spending plan for the 2022-2024 period. The purpose: To allow the legislature's Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission to produce a report on the Petersburg casino option.

The additional language restricting the Virginia Lottery's authority was added after Mayor Levar M. Stoney and City Council tried an end run around the original language by obtaining a court order authorizing the second vote on the casino.

City Hall and the governing body are seeking a second vote on the issue after voters narrowly rejected the project last November. In a stinging defeat for casino advocates, the proposal lost by 1,493 votes out of the 78,993 votes cast.

A review of the vote showed the project secured the most yes votes from majority Black and Brown sections of the city, while majority-white areas were more prone to vote against the development.

Sen. Joseph D. Morrissey, who currently represents both Richmond and Petersburg, pushed

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the Cockade City forward as a potential casino site after the defeat in Richmond.

While his legislation to substitute Petersburg for Richmond as the fifth site for a Virginia casino did not advance, Senate supporters proposed the budget language to enable JLARC to conduct a study, just as it had done for the other cities that have casinos in the works, Bristol, Danville, Norfolk and Portsmouth. The first JLARC study also included Richmond.

Sen. Morrissey said he supports the new language.

Mayor Stoney, though, has remained mum since the new language in the state budget was disclosed. So have the eight council members who backed a second vote and joined the push to get the issue back on the ballot for another try for approval.

Read more <https://richmondfreepress.com/news/2022/jun/02/richmonds-chance-landing-casino-still-awaits-peter/>