

Local control at issue in downstate New York casino talks

Written by Administrator

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As state lawmakers negotiate whether to extend up to three casino licenses in the New York City metropolitan region, there's a debate over how much control local government officials and community leaders should have in deciding where the casinos would be built.

Lawmakers expect a final agreement on the casino licensing plan for New York City and the surrounding region will be included in a finalized state budget plan, which is expected to be approved in the coming days.

"We want to make sure all the parties involved have some say as to, if the location as proposed is acceptable by them," said New York Assemblyman Gary Pretlow, the Democrat who leads his chamber's Racing and Wagering Committee.

Downstate casinos in the potentially lucrative New York City market could be a boon to the gambling interests that have long sought to enter the region.

"I didn't have community input when I had Resorts World thrust upon us," said Democratic Sen. Joe Abbaddo, Pretlow's counterpart in the state Senate. "I'm thankful 10 years later that we have it. But we couldn't even pick out the color of the carpet."

Still, Abbaddo is confident an agreement can be reached, but it's a matter of how much control municipal interests will have in siting.

"But community input is important," he said. "The degree of community input is what's being discussed."

New York state now has four commercially owned casinos in addition to the casinos operated by the state's Native American tribes. All of the casinos currently in operation are in upstate markets: The Capital Region, the Finger Lakes, Hudson Valley and the Southern Tier.

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New York has also expanded its gambling laws to include sports betting apps on mobile devices. With so much gambling, some industry experts have warned of a Northeast seaboard oversaturation by a variety of gambling options.

But Pretlow pointed to research showing table-top gaming attracting an older set of people; sports betting a younger crowd.

"I don't think there is a worry about saturation because the population of the area is well over 10 million people," Pretlow said.

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