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Ho-Chunk Nation Casino decision goes to voters

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Posted: [December 03, 2003](#) - 8:12am EST
by: [Pam Hughes](#) / Correspondent / Indian Country Today

MADISON, Wis. - The Dane County Board of Supervisors on Nov. 24 authorized a referendum on the expansion of the Ho-Chunk Nation's DeJope Bingo Hall into a casino in the state capitol.

The city of Madison approved the agreement the week of Nov. 17.

According to Dane County Chief of Staff Topf Wells, the county board agreed that would ask whether the nation should be able to offer casino-style gambling if a portion of revenues are paid to the city of Madison and Dane County.

The Ho-Chunk Nation's April 2003 first compact amendment with the state requires expansion be put to a countywide vote before approval by Gov. Jim Doyle.

In this second amendment to the compact the Ho-Chunk Nation has agreed to pay the county each more than \$45 million dollars from 2004 through 2016 and \$3.5 million thereafter for an indefinite period.

Expenditures for 2003 were budgeted at \$397.1 million for Dane County and \$7.5 million for the city of Madison.

The new agreement would provide each with approximately \$3.7 million annually for five years. In addition, the Ho-Chunk Nation has agreed to pay for any transportation in and out of the city and \$10,000 earmarked for Madison to the state problem gambling fund. The current municipal services annual payment will be replaced by the new payment agreement.

The amendment limits the Nation from competing with the city's main two convention centers. It requires it pay 8 percent of its gross hotel receipts to fund tourism promotion. Such a provision may be altered by the outcome of any lawsuit which challenges the terms of the compact that filed by state Republicans dissatisfied with the state's portion.

Wisconsin receives more gaming money than any other state except Connecticut.

The Ho-Chunk Nation has the only state compact with a no-compete clause. The Lac du Flambeau and Bad River Chippewa are each separately planning a casino, each of which is within a 30-minute driving time from Madison. The tribes have jointly sued U.S. Interior Secretary Gail Kyles' department for allowing the compact approval period to lapse without challenging the tribes' claim negotiations with the Ho-Chunk failed to materialize.

Ed Littlejohn, Ho-Chunk tribal spokesperson, stated that there would be no comment on this point in time.

The agreement also calls for a joint effort to preserve the mounds that currently exist on city land. The city will stop mowing the sites, which will be covered with appropriate vegetation and historically marked. They will be protected from any future municipal improvement case of sale, the Ho-Chunk Nation will be given right of first refusal.

County Executive Kathleen Falk is for the casino and Madison Mayor Dave Cieslev

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"It was a personal decision in his part. He has always been opposed to gambling on a national level and feels that he has negotiated in good faith and the agreement protects the interests of each Madison voter should vote their own conscience," said Janet Piraino, the managing editor.

Survivors of over 150 years of forced removal, epidemics, and broken and manufactured promises, the Ho-Chunk of Wisconsin have bought back 2,000 acres of their original 7-million-acre homeland, mostly with casino dollars.

The Ho-Chunk Nation currently has three casinos, in Wisconsin Dells, Black River Falls, and Nekoosa, and five truck stop bingo locations that are encumbered by various limitations that preclude large expansions.

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