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Slots? No. Poker? Yes.

Prince George's County Reverse Position on Gambling

By SHARON DONNELL

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AP

A Maryland county that opposed slots could be getting into the casino business instead.

A commercial license for a casino at the Rosecroft Raceway in Prince George's County would be issued under a bill proposed by Maryland State Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller Jr. (D-Prince George's and Calvert counties), the Washington Examiner reported. If passed, the bill would make Prince George's the first county in Maryland to offer casino games such as blackjack, poker and baccarat.

"We're not talking about a casino, we're just talking about a card game," Miller, whose family built Rosecroft in the 1940s, told the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee on Thursday. "We should have moved forward on this six years ago. Everybody here knows that, and we didn't for the wrong reasons," he said.

Table games are currently illegal in Maryland. State residents approved 15,000 slot machines at five sites in 2007. None of the sites has opened. All of them are outside Prince George's because of opposition from county lawmakers.

It would cost the state \$81 million to put a casino at Rosecroft, a bankrupt harness racing track in Fort Washington -- \$51 million in renovations and \$30 million to build the casino, the Examiner reported, citing a study by the Innovation Group, a leisure and hospitality consulting firm. Table games, if legalized, would bring nearly \$258 million in gross revenue in the first year, according to the study.

"Frankly I do not support slots," said Sen. C. Anthony Muse, D-Prince George's, who is co-sponsoring the bill with Miller. "But people have spoken overwhelmingly in Prince George's County and -- to the extent of 62 percent -- have said gaming of some sort is how we choose to spend our entertainment dollars."

55%

14%

11%

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