



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Governor Cuomo, Majority Leader Skelos, and Speaker Silver Announce Landmark Agreement to Begin Process of Amending State Constitution to Allow Casino Gaming in New York

DEAN G. SKELOS March 14, 2012

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos, and Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver today announced a landmark agreement to begin the process of amending the state constitution to allow casino gaming in New York. Legalized casinos have the potential to create thousands of good-paying jobs while keeping the tourism and revenue that accompany gaming here in New York State.

"By taking these important first steps to legalize casinos we are finally confronting the reality that while New York is already in the gaming business, we need a real plan to regulate and capitalize on the industry," Governor Cuomo said. "This is a process that will ultimately put thousands of New Yorkers to work, drive our economy, and help keep billions of dollars spent by New Yorkers on gaming in the state."

Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos said, "I am pleased we have reached an agreement to move forward with a constitutional amendment that will give New Yorkers a say on whether we expand casino gaming in New York State. I thank Senator John Bonacic for his leadership, and look forward to negotiating the details of the implementing legislation prior to putting it out to the voters in 2013."

Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver said, "Under the current system, gaming revenue is pouring out of the state as New Yorkers spend their entertainment dollars in neighboring states. We need the ability to keep that revenue here in New York. Today's vote represents the first passage of this amendment and we will work on accompanying legislation to further define this issue."

Senator John Bonacic, Chairman of the Senate Racing, Gaming and Wagering Committee said, "This is about creating jobs and enhancing tourism. While we have been down this road before, this time we have a much better driver. One thing we have learned is when the Governor says something, he means it. As Chairman of the Senate Racing, Gaming and Wagering Committee, I look forward to working with him to implement legislation necessary to create the thousands of direct and indirect jobs, along with the hundreds of millions of dollars in direct investment, which casino gaming can bring to the Catskills and elsewhere."

Today's agreement calls for no more than seven privately owned commercial casinos in New York.

Casino gaming already plays a significant role in New York State. Native Americans have five casinos in New York and nine racinos are located at race tracks across the state. New York also has 29,000 electronic gaming machines, more than Atlantic City and more than any state in the Northeast or Midwest. Additionally, New York is surrounded by states and Canadian provinces with legalized casino gaming. However, until now, New York has not taken steps to capitalize on the economic impact of gaming.

The Assembly and Senate must now pass legislation that begins the process of amending the state constitution, which will then be voted on by the next legislature and then ratified by the people. The earliest a public referendum can be held is 2013.