



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John J. Bonacic

Senator Bonacic Introduces Casino Gaming Legislation

JOHN J. BONACIC May 23, 2013

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State Senator John J. Bonacic (Orange County), has introduced legislation, S.5586, which would provide for a process to authorize up to seven licenses for casino gaming if a referendum on the Constitutional amendment to allow casino gaming this November is successful.

“Governor Cuomo gave us a road map, and while this is perhaps a slightly alternative route, we both are trying to reach the same destination. We both want the voters to have enough information to successfully pass a referendum in support of casino gaming this November,” Bonacic said.

Bonacic said he felt the more information voters had, the more likely it would be that they would vote for a referendum. He also indicated that he felt many voters on Long Island and the immediate New York City suburbs would be concerned about the potential to have a gaming facility too close to them, with the exceptions of places such as Westchester and Queens, where the facilities have been successful and not created problems that casino opponents typically predict.

“My sense is people in many high density, high traffic areas may want to have day trip access to the type of entertainment venue we are speaking of, but not necessarily want them in their Town. This approach deflates and potentially stops much of the NIMBY attacks that some might use to oppose the referendum,” Bonacic said.

Bonacic is proposing up to three casinos in the Catskills, mirroring the 2001 legislation that authorized up to three Native American gaming facilities in Ulster and Sullivan Counties. He is also proposing that the MTA Region (Long Island and the Hudson Valley from Dutchess and Orange Counties South) not be eligible for a casino except in Westchester and Queens Counties.

Bonacic’s proposal is similar to the concept outlined by the Governor two weeks ago in that it:

- Creates regions in the State where casinos would and would not be allowed;
- Does not allow any casinos downstate for the next five years;
- Creates a casino siting board appointed by the Gaming Commission to recommend who should receive a casino license;
- Ensures that options exist to site a casino in any area that once had an exclusivity zone but no longer does;

Requires local approval in the case of the first five casinos for the facilities (by County and locality resolution);

Requires that 80% of the State revenue generated by the first five casinos go to education and 20% go to property tax reduction (to be split between the host community (20% of the 20%) and the balance (80% of the 20%) to counties across the State).

Since Governor Cuomo outlined his plan, the Governor has settled compacts with two Native American Tribes or Nations – the Oneida and the Mohawks. “Let’s be honest here, the Governor drives the bus. The Legislature is on the bus. We all need to get to the destination on this issue – casino referendum passage. I think voters are going to want the type of information this bill calls for. I am hoping the Governor can use this proposal as he puts his own proposal into bill language. I am respectfully asking him to consider three casinos in the Catskills to honor the 2001 law that contemplated that number. He has done an amazing job settling issues relating to the Oneida and Mohawks. In fact it was stunning – it made the job of siting the casinos much easier”.

Under Senator Bonacic’s legislation:

The first casino would be located in any of the following counties: Columbia, Delaware, Greene, Sullivan, or Ulster;

The second casino would be located in any of the following counties: Broome, Seneca, Tioga, Tompkins, Chemung, Schuyler, or Wayne;

The third casino would be in Albany, Fulton, Montgomery, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Schoharie, or Washington;

The fourth casino would be in the Catskills (Delaware, Greene, Sullivan, or Ulster Counties);

The fifth casino would be in the Catskills or in Western New York (the Counties of Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Niagara, Orleans, and Wyoming and the portions of the Counties of Chemung, Ontario, Schuyler, Wayne and Yates West of New York State Route 14);

The sixth and seventh casinos would be in either Queens or Westchester Counties or in an area which previously was part of an “exclusivity zone” but which “exclusivity zone” was no longer in effect.

Casinos would be excluded on Long Island but both Nassau and Suffolk OTBs would be authorized under Bonacic’s legislation to operate one VLT parlor in each County. In addition, a portion of the revenue from any casino in Queens County, up to \$75 million per year, for five years, would be used for economic development purposes in and around Belmont racetrack.

“My view is Long Island is a key part of the State’s economy and a large portion of the State’s population.

Belmont is a major attraction. I want to continue to successfully grow Belmont and create economic development around it in a manner which is locally determined,” Senator Bonacic said.

Bonacic’s legislation also asks the State Gaming Commission to report back on the feasibility of expanding VLTs to other resort areas which do not receive casino licenses.

In addition, Bonacic proposes to modify the existing casino gaming commission by making the terms nine years and paying the Members of the Commission as full time State employees. “A nine year term would give the Commissioners actual independence, something I think which would help them make better decisions, removing most, if not all accusations of politics,” Bonacic said.

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