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Voters Set Stage for Fight Against Tribal Casino Expansion

Is Governor Granholm Listening, Willing to Lead?

Wayland, MI -- Last week, the State Senate followed suit with voters overwhelming support for Proposal 1 and took the first big step toward curbing the proliferation of casino gambling by pulling support for the proposed Gun Lake tribal casino. *The question that remains: Is Governor Granholm listening and willing to lead the fight to stop tribal casino expansion?*

Today, Michigan Gambling Opposition (MichGO), a statewide organization opposed to casino gambling, issued a call to action for Governor Granholm to follow the voters' lead by rejecting the Gun Lake tribal compact and leading the charge at the state and national level to stop tribal casino expansion.

"The voters have spoken loud and clear- It's time to stop the unbridled expansion of casinos in Michigan," proclaimed Todd Boorsma, president of MichGO. "The stage is set for Governor Granholm to take a leadership role at the state and national level to address the greater issue of tribal casinos expansion."

Overwhelming voter approval of Proposal 1, which requires a local and statewide vote of approval before any new non-tribal casinos gambling will be allowed to operate, played a key role in the State Senate's recent action to pull support for the proposed Gun Lake tribal casino in Allegan County.

Senate Resolution 308, approved last week by a vote of 24 to 11, included specific language that acknowledged voter approval of Proposal 1 by stating "The intention of the voters in approving the ballot proposal to limit the expansion of casino gambling in this state will be frustrated if tribal casino gambling continues to expand."

"We've seen Governor Granholm's strong leadership on other federal issues like diversion of Great Lakes water and importation of Canadian trash," noted Boorsma. "With the Michigan voters and a clear public mandate at her back, Granholm has an opportunity to shine on an issue of growing concern at the state and national level."

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Passage of Proposal 1 is reflective of a growing national trend of opposition to casino expansion. Gambling or gambling-related ballot measures were the second most common ballot issue this election year nationwide. Most notably, voters overwhelmingly opposed casino and gambling expansion in California, Michigan, and Nebraska.

MichGO also rejected claims by tribal casino proponents that Indian tribes can build a casino with or without a compact signed by the Governor. In Michigan, no tribal casino has even been built without the blessing of the State House, State Senate, and the Governor.

“If Granholm listens to voters and doesn’t sign the compact with the Gun Lake tribe, the only thing they can possibly do is open a Class II bingo hall,” declared Boorsma. “Clearly, that’s not what the Tribe’s Las Vegas financiers want.”

Boorsma cited the U.S. Supreme Court decision in 1996, *Seminole vs. Florida*, as evidence that tribal casinos are not inevitable and Michigan has the power to reject the development of a Class III tribal casino.

“The fact is no state has been forced to negotiate a compact to allow for tribal gaming since *Seminole vs. Florida*,” Boorsma continued. “It is time for Granholm to stand up to the casino lobby and Las Vegas special interests that are manipulating federal law and Michigan’s Native Americans to make a quick buck.”

Proposal 1 was approved by voters in the November election by a 58-42 margin. In Allegan County and the counties surrounding the proposed Gun Lake tribal casino, the margin of voter approval for Proposal 1 was even greater (Allegan County 64-36, Kent County 63-37, 59-41, and Ottawa County 70-30).

The proposed Gun Lake tribal casino has widespread opposition in West Michigan from local, state, and federal lawmakers, faith-based groups, and business organizations including the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce, Southwest Michigan First (Kalamazoo’s Economic Development Corporation), the Allegan Farm Bureau, and the Grand Rapids Downtown Development Authority.

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