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Michigan lawmakers approve deal with tribal casino

by The Associated Press

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LANSING -- The state will get a slice of revenue from a planned Native American casino southwest of Grand Rapids, thanks to a deal approved by both chambers of the Legislature.

The House approved a resolution on the compact with the Gun Lake tribe by a voice vote Thursday. A similar resolution was approved by the Senate earlier this month.

The 2007 compact was negotiated between the tribe and Gov. Jennifer Granholm. The federal government put 147 acres of land into trust for the casino in Allegan County's Wayland Township this year.

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The state will receive 8 percent of the casino's take from slot machines for the first $150 million. The state will get 10 percent or more from slot revenue above that amount.

The compact requires gamblers to be at least 21.

The tribe's full name is the Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians, but it is also known as the Gun Lake tribe.

A groundbreaking date has not been set. The casino is expected to open 12 to 16 months after construction begins.

States often seek compacts with tribes to gain some regulatory authority and generate revenue for the state treasury. Without a compact, states risk missing out on revenue from casinos that the federal government would allow to open anyway.

In return, compacts offer tribes a measure of territorial protection from gambling competition. Compacts also can foster cooperation between tribes and surrounding local governments.

The Gun Lake casino is expected to employ about 1,800 people and have about 2,500 electronic gambling machines and 80 gaming tables.

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