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Title: Oneidas, Pataki squabble on sharing casino moneyArticle Date: 19/12/2003, Source: *The Associated Press*

Article Text:

The leader of the Oneida Indian Nation yesterday accused top negotiators for Gov. George Pataki of bargaining in bad faith over land claims and other issues with the tribe.

Tribal President Ray Halbritter said the Pataki administration during land-claim talks has made "11th-hour" demands for the tribe to turn over a portion of revenues generated by its Turning Stone casino to the state.

"It is something that we're not going to accept," Halbritter said.

He said the Oneidas were willing to shut down Turning Stone and associated tribal ventures rather than to accede to "revenue sharing" with the state. According to financial filings, the 1,000-member Oneida tribe made a profit of about \$70 million last year on Turning Stone.

The Oneidas are one of several New York tribes that have said they would like to build one of the three Indian casinos allowed in the Catskills. A compact with the state is needed to open a casino, so friction between the tribe and Pataki could put a crimp in compact talks.

In an interview with Albany radio station WROW yesterday, Halbritter said Pataki negotiators John Cahill and John O'Mara are demanding the Oneidas turn over some revenues from Turning Stone in return for the state validating a compact for the casino.

Halbritter said agreements with both the Pataki administration and that of former Gov. Mario Cuomo ruled out payments based on Turning Stone gambling revenues.

"It was agreed to that there would be no revenue-sharing here," Halbritter said.

The tribal leader called more than 1,000 of his employees together last week to tell them of the direction of the talks with the state and how the Pataki administration was threatening Turning Stone jobs by its stand on getting some gambling revenues from the tribe.

Turning Stone has operated for a decade. Counting related businesses like hotels and golf courses, the Oneidas employ some 3,700 people. The state does not share in gambling revenues from Turning Stone under the compact the Oneidas reached in 1993 with Cuomo.

The validity of that compact has been called into question, however. The state's highest court ruled earlier this year that the governor and the state Legislature must both approve state compacts with tribes wishing to open casinos under the federal Indian Gaming Regulatory Act.

That decision invalidated a compact the state reached with Mohawk Indians to operate a casino in northern New York and, by extension, it called into question the Oneidas' compact. Both casinos remain in operation.

Pataki has been critical that the compact Cuomo reached with the Oneidas did not cut the state in on Turning Stone revenues.

Suzanne Morris, a spokeswoman for Pataki, said the administration has always negotiated in good faith with the Oneidas.

"Our position is that in order for the state to ratify the gaming compact, it must be assured a share of the revenues," Morris said yesterday.

She contended that the Oneidas had agreed to share revenues with the state and that it is the tribe that is reversing position.

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