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Top Stories

Schumer, Magee hail compact ruling

By: JOLENE WALTERS , Dispatch Staff Writer

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ONEIDA - "We've had, this week, a very significant court case," U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y. said at a media conference on Thursday at the Oneida office of Assemblyman Bill Magee, D-11.

On Monday, acting state Supreme Court Justice James McCarthy ruled that an 11-year-old gaming compact between the state and Oneida Nation is invalid.

In his judgment, McCarthy wrote, "this court finds the unilateral actions of then Governor Cuomo in entering into the compact without legislative approval clearly violated the doctrine of separation of powers recognized by Articles three to five of the constitution of the State of New York... and thus declares the 1993 compact invalid."

"The legislature did not approve the compact," Schumer said.

Both Schumer and Magee called for revenue sharing or payments-in-lieu-of-taxes (PILOT) from the Nation as possible terms of an agreement.

"We have a bargaining chip. A major bargaining chip," Magee said, adding, "We don't want the casino closed."

Schumer added that although the Turning Stone Casino is, "a great asset to our community," a valid compact with the state needs to be discussed. Schumer said that federal law requires a gaming compact in each state.

"The issues should have been settled in 1993," Magee added.

"Now is the time to fix an 11 year mistake that's cost the region's taxpayers millions of dollars without addressing the land claims issue," Schumer said. "Local residents have been getting the short end of the stick on this deal for

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years. Finally we have a golden opportunity to right that wrong and we must seize the moment."

In addition to the gaming contract, the state is also involved in talks with the Oneida Nation over its 250,000 acre land claim area.

"The bottom line is that we finally have the leverage we need to get a better deal for the localities and local homeowners," Schumer said. "The state needs to take advantage of this by ramping up negotiations with the Oneidas, addressing the land claim, finding a way to make up for lost tax revenue, and insisting on a share of gambling proceeds from Turning Stone Resort and Casino."

Schumer and Magee said if the Turning Stone Casino is to be kept open, the New York State Legislature will have to ratify a compact with the Oneida Indian Nation.

Oneida Nation officials issued the following statement following the media conference:

"While Sen. Schumer was in town looking for yet another way to bash the Oneida Indian Nation and grovel for votes, Turning Stone Resort and Casino personnel were busy interviewing local people anxious to fill the 800 new jobs created by the Nation. What is more important to the beleaguered Upstate New York economy: Creating good jobs with good benefits - jobs that generate local, state and federal taxes - or carping about something the Supreme Court has already ruled on twice?

"How many jobs has Sen. Schumer created?

"Where was Sen. Schumer as once-proud Oneida Limited laid off most of its workforce?

"Where was Sen. Schumer as Carrier cut 1,200 jobs?

"Where was Sen. Schumer as Ethan Allen closed?

"Where was Sen. Schumer when the Mohawk Valley experienced a devastating exodus of residents in the past 10 years?


"Sen. Schumer today proved he knows nothing of the Oneida Indian Nation, its land claim and its negotiations with the State of New York. He has no idea whatsoever what the Nation and the state have discussed.

"He did, however, prove he will not be happy until he has put every one of the 4,000 employees of the Oneida Nation out of work. Those are 4,000 New Yorkers who pay taxes, spend locally and, like the Nation, help drive the region's economy."

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