

Like Patrick and DeLeo, Murray would not want hometown casino

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By Andy Metzger

State House News Service

Beacon Hill's "Big Three" -- the state's most powerful forces behind enactment of the 2011 expanded gaming law -- are of like minds in disapproving of hypothetical casino proposals in their hometowns.

"No," Senate President Therese Murray told the News Service Monday when asked if she would approve of a casino in Plymouth. "Plymouth doesn't need a casino. It's a historic destination."

On her way to an event after attending a Hanukkah menorah lighting, Murray declined to expand on her answer.

A seaside town south of Boston, Plymouth was home to one of the country's oldest European settlements, founded by the pilgrims and led by William Bradford.

Gov. Deval Patrick had a similar answer when asked by a radio caller whether he would approve of a casino in Richmond, the far-western town where his Sweet P Farm is located.

"I would vote against it personally," Patrick said in November.

House Speaker Robert DeLeo said his hometown of Winthrop doesn't have the space for a casino.

"I don't know about Winthrop. Winthrop doesn't have enough space, so let me just put that right out there. If Winthrop was in another location and we had enough space, I'd say so," DeLeo said.

Winthrop has been designated a surrounding community by Suffolk Downs, the racetrack where DeLeo's father worked, which is hoping to build a casino in Revere, next door, after East Boston rejected the proposal. The Mass. Gaming Commission is weighing the split verdict and plans for a Revere-only casino.

On Monday, Patrick sued to block the Aquinnah Wampanoag's plans to build a casino on Martha's Vineyard outside of the regulatory process established by the state law.

The gaming law provided authority to cities and towns to determine whether to allow a casino or not. Developers have to first secure an agreement that would then be ratified or rejected by voters.

Patrick signed the gaming bill into law Nov. 22, 2011 after DeLeo and Murray pushed casino bills through their respective branches. DeLeo's predecessor, former House Speaker Salvatore DiMasi, strongly opposed casinos. The House reversed its position on casinos once DeLeo became the speaker.

After voters in several communities rejected proposals for gambling facilities within their borders, the state has just a handful of proposals still in the mix for three available casino licenses.

Gaming Commission Chairman Stephen Crosby said over the weekend that it could be three more years

before the state's first casino opens its doors.

"No" votes culled the field of contenders for casino licenses in the east and west to an MGM project in Springfield, a Wynn Resorts proposal in Everett and the Suffolk Downs bid. In the southeast, the Mashpee Wampanoag are seeking to build a tribal casino in Taunton while KG Enterprises has submitted an application to build a casino in New Bedford should the region be opened up to commercial bids.

Licensing of a slots parlor is down to a Cordish Companies bid in Leominster, a Penn National proposal at the Plainridge Racecourse in Plainville, and a group seeking to redevelop the old Raynham Park dog track into a slots parlor.