



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John J. Bonacic

Press Release- Bonacic: It's Up to the People

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After 50 Years, Legislature Poised to Pass Bill to Allow Casino Gaming in Catskills

State Senator John J. Bonacic (R/C/I – Mt. Hope) and Assemblyman Gary Pretlow last night introduced legislation (S.5883/A.8101) that is expected to pass the Senate and Assembly this week to authorize up to four casinos across three regions, including the Catskills, if voters approve the plan this November.

In May, Governor Cuomo proposed allowing up to 3 casinos to be spread across 6 upstate regions. Bonacic countered with a bill that would allow up to 5 casinos to be spread across three regions. The legislation expected to pass will allow 4 casinos across three upstate regions.

Senator Bonacic said, “For fifty years, the Catskills have sought gaming as a way to grow our tourism based economy. The gaming bill can create thousands of upstate jobs. New Yorkers now have a choice – keep our money in-state – creating jobs, improving education, and providing resort entertainment experiences; or help Connecticut, New Jersey, and Massachusetts. Now it’s up to the people.”

Bonacic recently met with the head of Foxwoods, which would like to compete for a casino in Liberty. Foxwoods President, Scott Butera informed the Senator that Foxwoods annually spends \$100 million a year with nearby businesses.

Empire Resorts is currently partnering with EPR to re-develop the Concord hotel site, has already spent tens of millions of dollars and is near having all local approvals in place. The Nevele project in Ellenville would pump nearly a half a billion dollars into Ulster County.

The Senator acknowledged that he would have preferred some changes in the final bill but the changes he preferred were not enough to ignore the opportunity the final agreement presented. "I would have preferred five not four casinos. However, with any number of casinos, the Catskills can and will successfully compete against any other part of the State and nation for gaming and entertainment dollars. We are the closest region to the City. We are an historic tourism destination. We have large gaming vendors ready to go. This is a key opportunity to change our economy for the next several decades," Senator Bonacic said.

Town of Thompson Supervisor Tony Cellini said, "It's here. This is our chance. We can grow the jobs that our residents hunger for, or continue to send money out of State. We need to get this done."

Ulster County Legislator Craig Lopez said, "This creates an opportunity for two casinos in the Catskills, including one at the Nevele. The jobs the Nevele can bring can transform Wawarsing. I look forward to working closely with Senator Bonacic in support of the gaming referendum, and then to work in support of the Nevele project."

For decades, legislation has been considered by the Senate or Assembly to authorize casino gaming. However, the two passages by two separately elected State Legislatures – which is needed to put the issue on the ballot - has never materialized.

“Governor Cuomo has accomplished what nobody else has in terms of leading both the Senate and Assembly to this point. I look forward to working with him to accomplish the promise of thousands of upstate jobs,” Senator Bonacic concluded.