

JEFFERSON CITY — Missouri schools could face a \$24 million funding shortfall because tax revenues from casinos are falling short of projections.

Gaming Commission Executive Director Roger Stottlemire warned the state's budget director of the funding gap in a letter sent just before Christmas and provided Wednesday to The Associated Press. Stottlemire said casino proceeds for education

were expected to be almost \$372 million this year but instead will be \$348 million.

"The slow economic recovery continues to severely impact the base gaming forecast," Stottlemire said.

State officials faced a \$54 million shortfall in casino revenue for education in last year's budget. Lawmakers approved \$63 million in a supplemental budget that used general state funds to make up for gaps in revenue from casinos and several other taxes.

State Budget Director Linda Luebbering said Wednesday that Gov. Jay Nixon had not decided whether to seek funding to offset the casino revenue this year. To fill this year's funding gap, Luebbering said the state could use general funds or federal money designed to help states avoid budget cuts to K-12 education.

"We'll be looking at ways to fill that shortfall," Nixon spokesman Sam Murphey said.

Lawmakers return to the Capitol for their annual session next week.

The Missouri Gaming Commission projected an increase in casino revenues because of a 2008 law approved by voters that removed a unique state law capping losses at casinos. That law repealed Missouri's law limiting gambling losses to \$500 over a two-hour period, capped licenses at 13 and increased gambling revenue taxes by 1 percentage point.

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Written by Administrator

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Stottlemire said the economy is improving and that regulators expect casinos to generate more than \$354 million for education in the 2012 budget year that starts July 1.

Officials have estimated that Missouri faces a roughly \$500 million budget deficit next year.

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