

Six New York racino operators are asking Gov. Andrew Cuomo and Assembly and state Senate leaders to put the brakes on a contract awarded by former Gov. David Paterson in the waning hours of his tenure to a Wisconsin Indian tribe to build a casino on 330 acres 90 miles north of New York City.

In a letter sent Tuesday to state officials, the group of racinos argue that a contract

awarded by Mr. Paterson to Wisconsin's Stockbridge-Munsee Community Band of Mohican Indians on Dec. 29 would cripple state-sponsored casinos. Indian casinos, like the Seneca Nation, have separately opposed the deal because the competition could cost them revenue.

The letter, written on behalf of the operators of Yonkers Raceway, Aqueduct, Monticello Casino and Raceway, Saratoga Gaming & Raceway, the Buffalo Trotting Association and the Fingerlakes Racing Association, said the new Sullivan county casino's table games and slot machines would lure existing customers from nearby facilities and cost the state millions of dollars in tax revenue.

"We believe that this compact, signed and submitted without public input or oversight and at the very end of [Mr.] Paterson's tenure, poses significant, negative budgetary impacts for New York state that should be carefully re-evaluated," the letter reads.

The group estimated that the project would cause Monticello, located about 10 minutes away from the proposed site, to shut down. As a consolation prize, Mr. Paterson reportedly offered Monticello \$100 million in state funds to finance an expansion but did not detail where that money would come from.

Those losses would leave the state with \$400 million less in annual tax revenue, the group said—including \$188 million in state education funding, \$127 million in racetrack commissions, \$51 million in horse racing industry support and \$40 million in lottery administration fees. Indian tribes also pay lower taxes on slots revenue and no taxes on table games, the group said in the letter.

The letter was sent to aides of Mr. Cuomo and to Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, a Democrat, and state Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos, a Republican. The state's remaining

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Written by Administrator

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three racino operators did not sign the letter, but a spokesman for the six racino operators said the remaining casinos also object to the deal offered by Mr. Paterson.

State officials did not respond to requests for comment.

The deal triggered a 45-day review period ending Feb. 19 by the Department of the Interior, which must approve the project in part because the agreement involves the resolution of a land dispute with the Wisconsin tribe. Racino operators have asked the state to put that review on hold.

Mr. Paterson said before he left office last month that the \$1.3 billion casino would provide about \$900 million in additional slot machine revenue and help revive the tourist economy in the old Borscht belt. The deal, also supported by Sen. Charles Schumer, would resolve longstanding claims by the Wisconsin tribe to 23,000 acres in the Catskills.

The letter asks state officials to conduct an economic analysis of the new casino's impact while requesting federal authorities put their review of the deal on hold.

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