

Davidson to head casino watchdogs - Columbus Dispatch

Written by Administrator
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Former Ohio House Speaker Jo Ann Davidson, who opposed the establishment of four casinos in the state, has been appointed to head a seven-member watchdog panel to oversee them.

Gov. John Kasich yesterday selected four Republicans, two Democrats and an independent to the Casino Control Commission, which is getting a late start after the GOP-controlled Senate rejected former Democratic Gov. Ted

Strickland's nominees to the commission in December.

Commission members, who will earn \$60,000 a year for part-time work, must act fast to hire a staff and draft rules governing the operations of casinos in Columbus, Cleveland, Cincinnati and Toledo.

"We're certainly hopeful the commission will get together quickly so they'll be prepared to issue the licenses in time for these casinos to start opening," said Bob Tenenbaum, spokesman for Penn National Gaming, developer of the Toledo and Columbus casinos.

Davidson, a Reynoldsburg Republican, said she is committed to an even-handed oversight process: "I believe the committee stands as a representative of the people who expect that if we're going to have casinos that they be operated in a fair and honest and ethical manner."

She and Senate President Tom Niehaus, R-New Richmond, acknowledged that a March 10 deadline set by the amendment to establish rules for the casinos would have to be moved back. The amendment prescribes no penalty for missing the deadline. Davidson said the commission will meet within two weeks and that all meetings will be open to the public.

"Our first major job is to begin working on the rules because nothing is going to move forward until we get some of these initial rules in place," Davidson said.

Kasich announced that his administration has put out a request for bids to hire a gambling expert to advise him on harmonizing policies for the state's various types of gambling, including horse racing, the Ohio Lottery and potential new forms such as video lottery terminals.

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Kasich has withheld taking a position on racetrack slot machines and likely will await a recommendation from the gambling expert on how to maximize the benefits of legalized gambling for taxpayers, said his spokesman, Rob Nichols.

"We're interested in how all this fits together," Nichols said.

Davidson, a 20-year member of the Ohio House, was elected the state's first female speaker in 1995, serving until she left the legislature in 2001. She will serve a term on the control commission ending Feb. 22, 2014.

Other members appointed by Kasich:

- McKinley E. Brown, a Cincinnati Republican, to serve a term ending Feb. 22, 2015. Brown is chief of detectives with the Hamilton County prosecutor's office.
- Lawyer Martin R. Hoke, a former GOP congressman from Lakewood, to serve a term ending Feb. 22, 2013.
- Ranjan Manoranjan, nonpartisan, a Columbus certified public accountant, to serve a term ending Feb. 22, 2014.
- Peter R. Silverman, a Toledo Democrat and lawyer, to serve a term ending Feb. 22, 2013.
- John S. Steinhauer, an Akron Republican and lawyer, to serve a term ending Feb. 22, 2015.
- June E. Taylor, a Cleveland Democrat and CEO of MWV Pinnacle Advisory Services, a private equity-investment fund, to serve a term ending Feb. 22, 2015.

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