

HARRISBURG -- Vietnam War veteran Rich Kitner, who lives near Gettysburg, was angry when a national American Legion official recently opposed the idea of putting a "resort hotel" casino not too far south of the famous Civil War battlefield.

Mr. Kitner and 50 other U.S. military veterans, from the Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Amvets, the Disabled American Veterans

and the Catholic War Veterans, rallied in Cumberland Monday in support of the proposed Mason-Dixon Resort Hotel and Casino.

"Local veterans overwhelmingly support this project because it will help create jobs, and it is not located on the Gettysburg battlefield," he said.

The casino would be located in the existing, 40-year-old Eisenhower Resort Hotel in Cumberland, not far from Mr. Kitner's house. He said residents in his township and all of Adams County need the jobs and property tax revenue that a casino would generate.

The casino near Gettysburg is one of four proposals for the state's second and last resort hotel casino, which will have 600 slot machines and several dozen table games.

The groups competing with Mason-Dixon are Nemacolin Woodlands Resort in Fayette County; a Holiday Inn in Mechanicsburg, just west of Harrisburg; and a resort in the Poconos in northeast Pennsylvania.

The state Gaming Control Board will hold final hearings on each proposal in Harrisburg next month, and is expected to award the gaming license in December. The only other resort hotel casino is near the Valley Forge military park, west of Philadelphia, but it hasn't opened yet.

Mr. Kitner said national veterans groups who oppose the Gettysburg casino idea haven't checked with local veterans, who like the idea. Some opponents think putting a casino near the battlefield would besmirch the memory of the men who died or were wounded in the three-day battle in July 1863.

But critics don't realize the need for jobs now in Adams County, Mr. Kitner said. He is also concerned that property taxes could rise due to a recent reassessment. But tax hikes would be mitigated by the casino, which he said has agreed to give an annual payment of \$1 million to the township and \$1 million a year to the county.

He said the national American Legion official who recently criticized the casino idea "did so without ever contacting any local Legion post or member," and Mr. Kitner is one of them. He said state American Legion officials have toured the property in Cumberland and think a casino is appropriate.

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