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BY

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Before a crowd of 700 senior citizens and unionized construction workers, [Gov. Paterson](#) and other officials broke ground on the long-delayed Aqueduct casino Thursday.

Conspicuously absent were state Sens. [Malcolm Smith \(D-Queens\)](#) , [John Sampson \(D-Brooklyn\)](#) and [Eric Adams \(D-Brooklyn\)](#)

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The three were slammed last week in an inspector general report that was highly critical of an earlier, abandoned decision to hire a poorly qualified, politically connected consortium, [Aqueduct Entertainment Group](#)

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"That's a continuing investigation that doesn't involve anyone who is here," Paterson told reporters who asked about the missing trio.

A Senate spokesman said all three were "working on our campaigns."

Paterson was also criticized in the IG report, but law enforcement sources said the other three could face perjury charges stemming from the investigation.

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The ceremony marked the official start of construction for the \$350 million renovation of an abandoned wing of [Aqueduct race track](#) 's huge grandstand and a milestone in a 10-year controversy over who would operate the facility.

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