

New details are emerging about a Chicago casino proposal.

Mayor Lori Lightfoot spent part of the week in Springfield lobbying lawmakers to approve a bill that would ease some of the casino taxes and fees. Lightfoot talked about that and other topics in a wide-ranging interview with WTTW News. ([Watch the full interview](#) .)

The new proposal would give new Illinois casinos – including one in Chicago – six years to pay out a mandated 75% reconciliation fee. That’s up from a period of two years in the current law.

Lightfoot says a city casino won’t get built under the current rules because the tax and fee structure is too onerous. To change it, she must convince suburban and downstate lawmakers to get on board. Lightfoot’s top selling point is that the casino would bring in more than \$800 million to fund state capital projects.

“The reality is about \$1 billion in vertical capital depends on revenue generated by a Chicago casino, so we believe there’s a more than compelling statewide case to get this done,” Lightfoot said. “I’m grateful for the support of Rep. Jay Hoffman (D-Swansea), a downstater making that case, but I think we’ll see other downstaters make that case as well.”

Gov. J.B. Pritzker has expressed his support for the plan, but did not say he could predict whether or not it will pass.

Also on Lightfoot’s Springfield agenda is the passage of a graduated real estate transfer tax in which owners of higher-end properties would pay higher rates when they sold those properties. Lightfoot is banking on this to eventually get \$100 million to plug budget deficits. But she doesn’t support the bill proposed in Springfield because it mandates that every year, \$70 million goes specifically toward homelessness.

“You want me to take \$70 million off the table, and we have a structural budget deficit every conceivable year into the future,” she said. “Can you explain to all the advocates for things like

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affordable housing, violence reduction, public health and others why it is that one issue should be elevated over all others and get an income stream in perpetuity in the multiple tens of millions of dollars? That doesn't make any sense to me.”

Lightfoot also sounded off on the debate over a community benefits agreement between the Obama Presidential Center and residents in nearby Woodlawn, and many other topics.

Watch the full, 20-minute interview below.

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