

Casino backers in Bristol make final push before election

Written by Administrator

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BRISTOL, Va. (AP) - Backers of a proposed casino and resort in southwest Virginia are ramping up efforts to boost support for the project before it goes to voters for a decision.

Virginia lawmakers opened the door for the project earlier this year, and now voters in the city of Bristol must approve it in a public referendum.

While Election Day isn't until Nov. 3, voting is set to start later this month under Virginia's new early voting law. A pro-casino referendum committee has sent mailers, placed signs, bought advertising and announced a group of about 30 small businesses that support the project, the Bristol Herald Courier recently reported.

"Honestly, this is a one-shot deal," Jason Eige, vice president and general counsel of project partner The United Co., told the newspaper. "If this doesn't pass this year, this referendum in this election cycle, that's it. We don't have another bite at the apple."

Hard Rock International is partnering with The United Co. - a local ownership group headed by wealthy coal industrialist Jim McGlothlin - and Par Ventures on the proposed project.

If approved, the casino group expects to submit its gaming license application to the Virginia Lottery Board by late 2020 or early 2021, the newspaper reported. The board has one year to make its decision.

Lawmakers approved legislation earlier this year to allow developers to build five large casino resorts around the state in what supporters have long hoped will be a dramatic economic boost to struggling areas. Virginia was one of the few states in the country where casinos were banned.

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