

Indiana casino executive charged in illegal campaign scheme

Written by Administrator

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INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — A top executive of an Indiana casino company that is building a new \$400 million casino in Gary has been indicted on federal charges of illegally funneling campaign contributions to a former state lawmaker's unsuccessful congressional campaign, officials announced Tuesday.

The federal indictment charges Spectacle Entertainment vice president John Keeler and former Republican Sen. Brent Waltz, of Greenwood, with taking part in a scheme to direct more than \$25,000 in illegal corporate contributions through straw donors to Waltz's 2016 campaign.

Keeler was then an executive of Centaur Gaming, which sold Indiana's two horse track casinos in Anderson and Shelbyville to Las Vegas-based Caesars Entertainment Corp. in 2018 for \$1.7 billion. He was part of a group that formed Spectacle to buy the Gary casino operation along Lake Michigan and lobbied state legislators last year to allow its move to a more lucrative on-land location.

Messages seeking comment were left for Keeler and at a phone number previously listed for Waltz, who was a state lawmaker for 12 years before giving up his seat for the congressional run.

Indianapolis-based Spectacle said in a statement that Keeler has taken administrative leave.

"It is important to remember that Mr. Keeler is presumed innocent of all charges," the statement said. "Spectacle Entertainment will have no further comment at this time."

The Indiana Gaming Commission this spring forced Keeler and fellow Spectacle executive Rod Ratcliff to give up their ownership stake in a planned new Terre Haute casino after a political consultant pleaded guilty in Virginia in January. The consultant had admitted to arranging for

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several people write campaign checks with casino company money funneled through a fake contract with for political work.

The Gaming Commission didn't immediately comment on the indictment.

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