

Seneca Nation Seeks Stay, Decision By Interior Dept. On New York Casino Compact

Written by Administrator
Monday, 26 April 2021 07:57 -

BUFFALO, NY (WBFO) – The Seneca Nation of Indians announced Friday they have filed a motion in federal court seeking a stay of their Casino Compact payments to New York State, while urging the federal government to make a final decision on the legality of the deal first implemented in 2002.

A view of Seneca Niagara Casino. CREDIT WBFO FILE PHOTO

The Senecas have insisted that under the Compact, their financial obligations to New York State ceased after the original 14-year deal. But in the years following, New York State insisted the Seneca Nation still owed regular casino revenue payments of hundreds of millions of dollars. [In 2019, an arbitration panel sided with New York State](#) .

But, the Seneca Nation argues, the federal government has never formally decided on the legality of the terms within the Compact. In a video message released Friday, Seneca President Matthew Pagels explained their latest legal action.

“Specifically, we disagree whether the payments are still required during the complex seven-year renewal period. In March, I invoked the provisions of the Canandaigua Treaty of 1794 to request assistance from United States government to review whether the compact payment provisions are lawful,” he said. “Last week, the Nation received a letter from the US Department of Interior that raised concerns about whether these disputed payments are legal and consistent with the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, since they were neither reviewed nor approved by the Secretary of Interior. We share in these concerns.”

Pagels urged the Cuomo Administration to comply and submit the Compact to the federal government for closer review.

“Review by the Department of Interior can answer those questions,” Pagels said. “This is not only the right way to resolve the dispute, it’s also the fastest. Waiting 45 days for the Secretary of Interior to rightfully weigh in on the matter could prevent additional months or even years of protracted litigation.”

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