

Suits could have major impact on casino gaming - WWMT

Written by Administrator
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MICHIGAN (NEWSCHANNEL 3) – A developing story in northern Michigan could have a major impact on casino gaming.

The developing situation is a fight between the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Ottawa Indians and the Bay Mills Indian Community over a small casino Bay Mills opened in Vanderbilt in November.

Little Traverse and the

Michigan Attorney General have filed lawsuits in federal court to shut that casino down.

The lawsuit alleges that if the casino isn't shut down, new slot machines and game tables could start popping up everywhere and anywhere.

Little Traverse owns a casino less than 40 miles from the casino in Vanderbilt, so this is partially about Little Traverse not wanting Bay Mills cutting into its business, but it goes beyond that.

“The day he opened I called him up, I said, 'Jeff what are you doing?’” said Little Traverse Tribal Chairman Ken Harrington. “He explained his legal theory, I said, 'I disagree.’”

Jeff is Jeff Parker, Tribal Chairman of Bay Mills. His legal theory is that his tribe bought the land for the casino with money won in a suit against the U.S. Government, and that allows his tribe to have a casino there.

Little Traverse Attorney John Petoskey says that land shouldn't be considered Indian land.

“If it's not on Indian lands, then it's on state land,” said Petoskey. “Then it's a question of whether they're violating state law. That's just any group of people opening up a gambling hall.”

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Harrington says allowing the Vanderbilt casino could open the floodgates and allow tribes to put casinos anywhere.

He says that a tribe could hypothetically buy an open piece of land, even in downtown Kalamazoo and start building a casino.

Little Traverse has asked for a temporary injunction to close the casino while the lawsuit runs its course, but there has not yet been a decision on that request.

Newschannel 3 received a response to the lawsuits from Bay Mills Tribal Chairman Jeff Parker. He writes; "we're confident in our legal position. If we weren't, we wouldn't have opened our Vanderbilt location."

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