

Written by Administrator
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Cherokee Nation Businesses attorney Dustin McDaniel has partnered with another Little Rock attorney, David Couch, to fight an anti-casino campaign in Pope County.

McDaniel and Couch on Tuesday announced the creation of a ballot question committee, the Arkansas Tourism Alliance, that will oppose Fair Play Arkansas. The latter group is gathering signatures for a ballot measure that would remove Pope County from Amendment 100, the measure voters approved in 2018 to expand gaming in the state. Fair Play Arkansas needs to submit 89,151 signatures by July 8 to make the November ballot.

McDaniel's group said it will encourage voters not to sign the petition, which it said threatens jobs and tourism revenue.

Cherokee Nation was awarded the Pope County license in [late 2021](#) after a legal fight with Gulfside Casino Partnership, advancing plans for a \$225 million project, Legends Resort & Casino. The casino is expected to create more than 1,000 permanent jobs. CNB also has a \$38.8 million economic development agreement with Pope County.

But while multi-million dollar expansions at other Arkansas casinos are well underway, the project in Russellville has been delayed by litigation. Construction is expected to begin this summer.

Groups including Fair Play Arkansas have argued that Pope County never wanted a casino. The majority of voters in the county opposed the 2018 amendment that expanded gaming in the state.

"We deserve what 71 other counties in Arkansas enjoy: the freedom to live without a controversial gambling development forced on us," the group says on its website.

Group Aims to Stifle Anti-Casino Campaign in Pope County | Arkansas Business News

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Fair Play Arkansas announced [last month](#) that the Oklahoma-based Choctaw Nation, a rival of the Cherokees, was providing financial support and other resources for the campaign. Choctaw Nation, which runs casinos in Oklahoma, applied for the Pope County license that was eventually awarded to the Cherokees.

"We're grateful for contributors like Choctaw Nation willing to respect our county's position and support our effort to remove that mandate," Fair Play spokesman Hans Stiritz said.

The Choctaws have also been linked to anti-casino justices of the peace. Pope County Judge Ben Cross in December [accused them](#) of colluding to disrupt casino plans.

The Arkansas Tourism Alliance said it aims to "educate voters on the true purpose and effect of Fair Play Arkansas."

"Fair Play for Arkansas is merely a front for those who would rather see billions of dollars go to Oklahoma and not Arkansas," the group said.

Read more <https://www.arkansasbusiness.com/article/139157/group-aims-to-stifle-anti-casino-campaign-in-pope-county>