



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LEGISLATION INTRODUCED TO APPROVE GAMING COMPACTS

Legislators, environmental, labor & tribal leaders: "Now's the time"

SACRAMENTO—Legislators, environmental, labor, City of Barstow and tribal representatives from the Los Coyotes Band of Cahuilla and Cupeno Indians and Big Lagoon Rancheria gathered today at the State Capitol to announce the introduction of legislation (Senate Bill 157) to approve the Los Coyotes and Big Lagoon gaming compacts.

Senator Patricia Wiggins (D-Santa Rosa) joined co-author Senator Roy Ashburn (R-Bakersfield) in introducing the package that would protect the environmentally sensitive natural habitat area on the Big Lagoon tribal land from development and allow the tribes to proceed with jointly developing a casino resort complex in Barstow.

"It is uncommon here in Sacramento for a project to come along that uniquely benefits so many people, communities and organizations across the state of California," said Senator Wiggins. "This piece of legislation is the last step needed to make this project a reality. I am proud to co-author it and I look forward to seeing it happen this year."

"This is one of those rare occasions where everyone involved is in agreement," said Senator Ashburn. "The Big Lagoon Compact is a good idea. The tribes like it, the governor has signed it, and the people of Barstow are enthusiastically supportive. Now it's time for the legislature to do the right thing and ratify this compact."

City of Barstow Mayor Lawrence Dale and Councilman Tim Silva also joined the groups at the Capitol today to demonstrate the Barstow community's support for the compacts.

Within the proposed 48-acre casino complex, each tribe will own and operate an individual gaming facility. The compacts also specify how associated revenues and infrastructure costs will be fairly distributed among the tribes, as well as the state and local governments.

Last legislative session, legislators approved only one gaming compact.

“This year, I hope legislators look beyond politics and into their hearts to make the right decision – one that will help us reach our dream of providing real opportunities to uplift our people from poverty,” said Los Coyotes Spokeswoman Catherine Saubel. “The compacts represent a tremendous partnership that meets the needs of the Tribes, the community of Barstow and the State of California.”

The Big Lagoon compact is of particular significance to environmental organizations across the state.

“Preserving Big Lagoon is a top priority for the Coastal Commission,” said Peter Douglas, Executive Director, California Coastal Commission. “The compact provides a clear path to that goal by shifting the development to a much more suitable location. It would be hard to imagine a worse place to build a casino, nor a more elegant solution to the problem.”

Big Lagoon Rancheria Chairman Virgil Moorehead emphasized the urgency of approval of the compacts.

“We thank Senators Wiggins and Ashburn for recognizing the importance of protecting the environmentally sensitive resource on our tribal land while respecting our right to achieve self-sufficiency,” said Chairman Moorehead. “Unless legislators act now to protect environment at Big Lagoon, the future of this precious natural resource may be left up to the courts.”

Under the compacts, the tribes also agree to allow casino employees to organize collectively – a provision that has been hailed by labor unions.

“The 500,000 members of UNITEHERE, the international hotel and casino workers union, proudly stand with our friends in the Los Coyotes and Big Lagoon Tribes. We implore the State Legislature to ratify these tribes' compacts with urgency, now that the State Legislature has reconvened for this year's session," said Jack Gribbon, California Political Director of UNITEHERE. "We applaud the Governor and the tribes for including worker-friendly provisions and protections in the compacts, and we look forward to helping our tribal partners to advance their cause of economic self-sufficiency in the weeks and months ahead."

Governor Schwarzenegger announced compacts with the Los Coyotes and Big Lagoon tribes in September 2005. The City of Barstow has approved Municipal Services Agreements with both tribes. The Los Coyotes and Big Lagoon have submitted land-into-trust applications to the federal government and the Bureau of Indian Affairs is currently preparing a draft environmental impact statement to identify potential environmental impacts of the project. California lawmakers must pass legislation to approve the compacts, the final state step in proceeding with jointly developing the casino resort.

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The Barstow Casinos and Resort are designed to capture some of the market of an estimated 60 million cars that travel through the community on their way to and from Las Vegas each year. The projects will support approximately 900 construction jobs and 1,700 full time positions at the casinos. It is expected that the Los Coyotes and Big Lagoon tribes will contribute to the local community government yearly and generate millions of dollars in new revenue for the Barstow economy. The Barstow community has lagged behind the state in economic development with more than 35 percent of the residents on public assistance. More than 2,000 local residents signed postcards addressed to the Governor asking him to negotiate the compacts. More information is available at www.barstowcasinosandresort.com.