

Opinion: \$7 bil. year Indian gaming industry gets little notice

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For all their palaver about jobs, Democrat Jerry Brown and Republican Meg Whitman ignore public talk about a growing industry that generates \$7 billion-plus annually.

Soon after taking the oath of office, however, the next governor will face weighty issues presented by California Indian tribes that own casinos and hope to renegotiate compacts with the state. Tribes that aspire to own Las Vegas-style casinos will want a place at the bargaining table.

Brown is no neophyte to the world of gambling and its regulation. As attorney general, he oversaw card rooms. But neither he nor Whitman has discussed the topic in any detail on the campaign trail.

The gambling industry spent \$48 million lobbying in Sacramento during the first decade of this century. During that period, Indian casinos and some tribes and investors became rich, while counties and residents of certain rural areas faced traffic, environmental stress and social costs.

There is no turning back. Expansion will continue.

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