

Politics at center of off-reservation casino fight

By Laurel Rosenhall, Sacramento Bee

In the coming weeks, Gov. Jerry Brown will decide whether two Indian tribes in remote parts of California can build gambling establishments next to freeways many miles from their homes.

The questions he faces put him at the center of a big-money casino fight – a massive lobbying effort in the Capitol that includes some very rich and influential groups.

The proposals from the Enterprise Rancheria near Marysville and the North Fork Rancheria near Fresno are part of the growing phenomenon critics describe as off-reservation casinos. But they are unusual because approval is in the hands of the governor under a process that's been used only a few times nationwide.

Most Indian casinos are on either tribal land or land restored to a tribe by the federal government, leaving state politicians out of the equation.

The Enterprise and North Fork proposals are subject to a different bureaucratic process because they don't necessarily fit those criteria – tribal members already have land but want to build casinos somewhere else.

Their projects have been given the green light by the U.S. Interior Department. Now Brown has until Aug. 31 to decide whether they can move ahead.

Read the whole story