

# Editorial: Stop California's spread of Indian gaming

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Indian gambling in California has exploded well beyond the "modest increase" voters were promised when they approved casino gambling just 13 years ago. While most casinos are still in remote locations, a new push by tribes to purchase additional land at lucrative freeway locations threatens to kick off a whole new Indian casino land rush. The Legislature should reduce that threat by rejecting a pair of ill-conceived gambling compacts.

As the Bee's Laurel Rosenhall reported on Sunday, two tribes, the Enterprise Rancheria near Marysville and the North Fork Rancheria near Fresno, won approval from President Obama's interior secretary last year to acquire land more than 30 miles from their original reservations. Gov. Jerry Brown unwisely concurred in that decision and has negotiated gambling compacts with the tribes.

The Enterprise Indians seek to build their new gambling hall just off Highway 65 in Yuba County next to the Sleep Train Amphitheatre. The North Fork Indians want to build a casino on Highway 99, about 25 miles north of downtown Fresno.

At this point in the process, the only thing standing between the tribes and their dreams of gambling riches is the California Legislature. The compacts that Brown negotiated with the tribes must be approved by lawmakers.

Powerful opponents and proponents are lining up on both sides. Deep-pocketed investors from Nevada and Chicago are bankrolling the Enterprise and North Fork efforts. Meanwhile, existing gambling tribes oppose them, angered that their own

gambling enterprises will be placed at a competitive disadvantage.

The Enterprise and North Fork tribes are engaged in reservation shopping at its most blatant. It breaks faith with voters who were told that gambling would be confined to existing Indian lands – remote areas of the state for the most part, not plopped down near cities.

Why should established gambling tribes who've played by the rules continue to live up to their agreements, to make mitigation payments to state and local governments or share their proceeds with non-gambling tribes if the state breaks the spirit of the initiative and allows the competition to be much closer to their customer base? How long before existing gambling tribes use their considerable clout and wealth to persuade authorities to let them build casinos in or near urban areas too?

Every time the U.S. government takes land into trust for an Indian tribe, it creates a semi-sovereign ministate within a state's borders. There are 110 federally recognized Indian tribes in California, and 70 or so more are seeking recognition. How many ministates, all with the right to build lucrative casinos, can California accommodate?

A story in the Bee on Tuesday reported that the Graton Resort and Casino expects to hire 2,000 workers by the time it opens in Rohnert Park later this year. But many of those jobs will simply be taken from somewhere else.

There is only so much disposable income for gambling in California, and the state is already saturated with casinos. Each one that is added takes from another. It's a zero-sum game.