

CITIZENS AGAINST EXPANDED GAMBLING



April 17, 2020

For Immediate Release

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Federal Bureau of Indian Affairs Approves Beloit Casino Amid COVID-19 Crisis

The Federal Bureau of Indian Affairs [approved the Beloit Fee-to-trust application](#) for an off-reservation Casino and is now headed to Governor Tony Evers' desk for the final decision. In typical BIA fashion, the decision comes amid the COVID-19, making it nearly impossible to cut through the noise and alert Wisconsin citizens. Even worse, citizens cannot get a staffer to answer the Governor's office phone or leave a message because the voice mail box is consistently full.

If approved by the Governor, the Beloit Casino would be a precedent setting, first of its kind, off-reservation casino in Wisconsin. The casino market is already over-saturated with 25 casinos throughout Wisconsin, leaving no one with more than a 2-hour drive. Adding a casino would reduce the gains from one tribe to benefit another and could jeopardize the intertribal cooperation that has generally characterized the past two decades. Casinos prey on the repeat business of local residents, and in a saturated market, do not serve as a draw for tourism.

"This isn't a small casino neatly nestled in a rural area. They are proposing to build an urban, off-reservation casino complex on a prime parcel of 33 acres in Beloit, with the likelihood of an additional adjacent 40 acre parcel, currently owned by Ho Chunk Nation, becoming a part of the fee-to-trust," said Lorri Pickens, Executive Director of Citizens Against Expanded Gambling. "I don't think people realize what the loss of local control over 73 acres can do to a community. That is a major part of their city."

The casino has made little progress over the past 20 years, until the Nov. 9, 2018 ruling from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) that placed a draft environmental impact statement of the plan in the federal registry. "There's a pattern by the BIA to mute voices of Wisconsin citizens who stand in opposition by conveniently putting public comment periods between holidays. The timing is a blatant effort to minimize the opposition and give the appearance that everyone is elated about this casino coming to town," said Pickens.

The BIA-sponsored public hearing for the draft environmental impact study, was intentionally sandwiched between the 2018 Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. Similarly, the final impact study was released in May of 2019 with the public comment period also positioned between the Memorial Day and 4th of July holidays. And yesterday, the BIA approved the fee-to-trust application amid a pandemic that has caused the entire state of Wisconsin to shut down until May 31.

There is major opposition by the citizens of Beloit and throughout the state of Wisconsin. Citizens Against Expanded Gambling strongly encourages those who oppose this off-reservation casino to visit our website at www.stopthebeloitcasino.com and sign the [petition](#).

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