

KCOY – Channel 12
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Preservation Groups Try To Stop Potential Expansion of Chumash Casino

Opening : Preservation groups in the Santa Ynez valley say they're taking action now to prevent what they say could lead to a dramatic expansion of the Chumash Casino in Santa Ynez. The tribe says their outspoken critics are way off the mark.

Keith Carls - The governor opened talks with California tribes last year during his re-election campaign about expanding slot machines at Indian casinos as part of a plan to generate more income for the state.

The tribes pay the state a percentage of income from slot machines. The Chumash says it had one formal meeting with the governor's office about adding 5,000 machines.. or about the same number the other tribes were considering. Under terms of its current compact with the state which expires in 2020, the Chumash operates a maximum allowed two thousand slot machines at its Santa Ynez casino.

Last December, the Chumash says it told the governor it was not interested in expanding... at least not right now.

Negotiations with five other tribes to add more slot machines are being held up by opponents in the legislature. A coalition of Santa Ynez valley preservation groups says if the legislature approves slot machine expansion... it would by default open the door for the Chumash to expand as well... either at its current facility in Santa Ynez or somewhere else in the county... without adequate public input or study of impacts to the community.

Kathryn Bowen - “What that means is that if any of the five compacts that are sitting in the legislature right now, any one of them are ratified, then this tribe can request from the State the same compact.”

C.J. Jackson - “That is why a meaningful examination of the burdens and impacts specific to Santa Barbara and to each community in the State needs to be undertaken before these compacts are approved.”

Vincent Armenta - “We don't even own land, number one. Number two, it's not in trust. Number three, there is an Indian Gaming Regulatory Act that says lands prior to 1988...there...this is what I'm saying. The sky's not falling. The only thing that is falling is the credibility of these individuals.”

Keith Carls - Now Tribal Chairman Armenta says he's already told at least 3 of the 5 county supervisors that the tribe has no intention of expanding now and if it did, he personally would notify them by at least 90 days, which is required by law.

The coalition of preservation groups says it will go before the county board of supervisors next week to seek a resolution to address Indian casino expansion and any potential impacts on Santa Barbara County. Chumash representatives plan to be there as well.