



## News Release

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### **Stockbridge-Munsee Urgently Calls Upon Governor Walker to Fairly Enforce State Gaming Compacts**

**BOWLER, WISCONSIN (October 19, 2016)** – The Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Indians today called upon Governor Walker and his Administration to fairly enforce state gaming compacts for all tribes. This plea is echoed by other tribes throughout the State, including the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin and the Mole Lake Sokaogon Chippewa Community.

As defined by the Wisconsin Department of Administration, gaming compacts are negotiated between each tribe and the State to set forth the rules, regulations and conditions under which each tribe may conduct Class III gaming. These policies are intended to create a fair balance between the State's need to regulate gaming and each tribe's sovereign rights and need for economic development.

For decades, the State has placed clear restrictions on the size, number and nature of gaming facilities across the state, establishing a distinction between full-scale casinos and much smaller ancillary facilities. However, in a perplexing and surprising reversal on its past position, the State is allowing the Ho-Chunk Nation to broadly reinterpret compact terms related to ancillary facilities and is, in effect, sanctioning unapproved and unfettered expansion of gaming in Wisconsin. If allowed to continue, all tribal/State gaming compacts will be rendered meaningless, destabilizing Wisconsin's carefully negotiated gaming environment, increasing the likelihood of widespread and costly tribal litigation, and creating uncertainty about the future of State tribal gaming revenues – all of which benefit no one.

This issue came to light when the Ho-Chunk Nation announced an expansion of its Wittenberg ancillary casino facility (located near a gas station on U.S. Highway 45) into a full-blown casino resort, complete with over 750 slot machines, a new high-limit gaming area, 10 table games, an 86-room hotel and conference center facility, and an 84-seat restaurant/bar. The groundbreaking for this expansion took place in late September 2016.

According to the State's own definition, an ancillary gaming facility is restricted in both size and scope in order to clearly differentiate it from a full-scale casino. Among other qualifications, it must be attached to a non-gaming facility (such as a gas station) and generate less than 50 percent of the combined facility's net revenue. In addition, 50 percent or more of the lot coverage on which the ancillary facility is located must be used for a primary business purpose

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other than gaming. Neither the Ho-Chunk's current Wittenberg facility nor its planned expansion adheres to those terms. Moreover, long-standing questions persist regarding whether gaming of any type is permissible on this particular parcel of land. The State's refusal to demand an Indian Land Opinion from the National Indian Gaming Commission on the Wittenberg Casino site essentially allows any tribe to operate any type of gaming on any land it wants.

Lastly, it appears the Administration is applying different criteria to different tribes when considering the expansion of gaming in Wisconsin. When rejecting the Menominee Indian Tribe's proposed new casino in Kenosha, the State defined three core criteria as the basis for its decision: support from the community; consensus from all 11 tribal governments; and no increase in overall gambling. The expansion of Ho-Chunk's facility in Wittenberg does not pass muster on any of these three criteria.

"The Stockbridge-Munsee Tribe is committed to positive relations between all tribes and believes in each tribal nation's right to self-determination in accordance with federal and state Indian gaming regulations," said Shannon Holsey, president of the Stockbridge-Munsee Tribal Council. "We find it hard to believe that Gov. Walker would endorse such a broad reinterpretation of State compact language given the profound consequences for future gaming expansions in Wisconsin. All we are seeking is a fair resolution that protects the validity of tribal state compacts while allowing each tribe to pursue continued self-determination."

#### **About the Stockbridge-Munsee Tribe**

The Stockbridge-Munsee Mohican Tribe is one of 11 tribes in Wisconsin and has approximately 1,470 tribal members throughout the state, 34 percent of whom live on the tribe's reservation in Shawano County. The Stockbridge-Munsee Tribe is the largest employer in Shawano County and operates the North Star Mohican Casino Resort, its sole gaming facility, which features 1,200 slot machines and 22 table games. The Tribe is committed to being a good steward of economic, environmental and intellectual resources in the region and strongly believes in the power of education. Each year, the Stockbridge-Munsee Tribe contributes more than \$100,000 in funding to the area's two largest school districts and more than \$200,000 to support neighboring communities and other Wisconsin Indian tribes. For more information about the Tribe, visit the website at <http://www.mohican.com/> or the tribal Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/smcmohican/>.

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