



# Indian casinos in Alabama might be willing to share profits with state

<http://www.wtv.com/content/news/Indian-casinos-in-Alabama-might-be-willing-to-share-profits-with-state-401822636.html>

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Posted: Thu 10:52 PM, Nov 17, 2016 |

Updated: Thu 11:07 PM, Nov 17, 2016

**Montgomery-** A task force created by Governor Robert Bentley to examine gambling issues in Alabama heard contrasting views on the matter Thursday when it met for a second time.

A spokesperson for the Poarch Band of Creek Indians indicated that the tribe might be willing to share profits with the financially strapped state government. "We feel like (\$50-\$70-million) annually is what we think we could possibly do," said Robert McGee, PCI's government relations advisor.

He said to nail down an exact figure would be premature at this point. Tribal leadership would have the final say.

The money would not come without conditions. The Poarch Band---Alabama's only federally recognized tribe--- would insist on a compact with the state. What it would want in return is something McGee said he cannot answer now.

PCI owns three Wind Creek casinos. Montgomery, Wetumpka, and Atmore each have one. While the tribe doesn't share profits with the state, it does fund local governments and other projects. McGee said income generated by casinos has greatly improved lifestyle quality for the tribe's members.

McGee said that Class Two gaming----electronic bingo machines at Wind Creek casinos----are likely more profitable than Class Three gaming that includes traditional slots and table games like blackjack and craps.

However, in other states---Florida is one---Native Americans insisted on those when negotiating compacts.

McGee also said the tribe might be willing to allow non-tribal casinos now operating in Alabama to remain open if a compact is adopted. Those---including Victoryland that geographically rivals two PCI locations--- have been closed multiple times amid allegations they are violating state law. Federal law protects Indian casinos.

The task force also heard from the head of an anti-gambling organization. Les Brenal, national director of Stop Predatory Gambling, said casinos are not the answer to generate revenue for the state.

"This is the ultimate budget gimmick. It has been a failed strategy," Brenal told the task force. He said gambling leads to crime and economic distress for everyone, including those who don't gamble.

The 11-member Governor's Gaming Task Force will meet several more times in coming weeks and report its findings to Bentley no later than January 31.