

Tribal Gaming Compacts, New Racetrack for Northeastern New Mexico Good for All
By Senator Pete Campos

Responsible gaming, whether at a tribal casino or a horse racetrack, is an attractive economic development tool for New Mexico, attracting tourists, contributing to our unique culture and generating jobs and revenue for public education and other critical state services.

Quick approval of new tribal gaming agreements and of a horse racetrack in northeastern New Mexico will help continue our economic momentum.

Gaming in New Mexico is here to stay, and gaming on tribal lands is properly respected as an offering of sovereign governments that, like New Mexico's state lottery, generates revenue for tribal governmental services. I'm pleased that a respectful and trusted government-to-government relationship has resulted in a favorable agreement that will allow tribal gaming to continue to flourish in New Mexico. New Mexico's racetracks, which offer more limited "casino-style" gaming, also support state services directly through the significant taxes paid by the tracks and indirectly through jobs created and increased economic activity.

The new tribal gaming agreements help ensure that gaming at Indian casinos will be done responsibly, with new safeguards to prevent problem gambling and continued prohibitions against alcohol being allowed on the actual casino floor. The tribes that agree to the 2015 gaming compact will keep more of their revenue for critical tribal government programs than those that signed an agreement in 2007; but since any tribe can sign the 2015 agreement, all will have the opportunity to benefit from the new, more favorable agreement, and the state will benefit from stability in the gaming industry and greater revenue over time.

The state's general gaming policy, which takes into account and integrates tribal gaming, ensures that the market is not and does not become saturated. The number of tribal casinos and horse racetracks is limited, as are the number of slot machines allowed at the horse racetracks. With a variety of offerings, from high-end resorts to racinos that offer the excitement of live horse racing to smaller, more casual casinos, New Mexico's gaming industry has something to offer to a broad spectrum of visitors.

Jobs for Native Americans, entertainers and those in the hospitality industry are being created every day. Building, operating and maintaining a highly regulated gaming facility,

complete with restaurants, lounges and entertainment venues, is no easy matter and requires skilled and well-compensated workers who have studied and received degrees in relevant fields.

With the future of Indian gaming taking shape, it is time for New Mexico to license a sixth and final horse racetrack. Northeastern New Mexico is uniquely positioned to host this track, as every other area of the state already has a track and Luna Community College is poised to launch an equine program and to train students to be employees at a horse racetrack and casino. The college is also prepared, through its Small Business Development Center, to help current and future small businesses with business plans to serve a horse racing and casino industry.

A northeastern New Mexico track would provide a much-needed economic jolt to an area of the state that already has the foundation and commitment to support such an industry.

New Mexico's future is looking bright, due in no small part to the benefits of tribal gaming and our strong horse racing industry.