

Florida Casino Development: Florida Gambling Commission in the Works, Las Vegas Sands and Gambling Industry Set Sights on Florida

By Rosa Schechter

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Florida casinos, like the one proposed for **Genting's Resorts World Miami**, are one step closer to reality as Florida legislators will begin consideration of a new bill designed to regulate these new Vegas-like, resort-style casinos here in the Sunshine State.

It's expected that Florida House Rep. Erik Fresen (R-Miami) and Florida State Senator Ellyn Bogdanoff (R-Fort Lauderdale) will debut their joint effort in a proposal that would impose state regulation on gambling in these swank casinos in much the same way that has proven successful in places like Las Vegas and Atlantic City.

This would include a Florida gaming commission to oversee things. Following Nevada's example, Florida officials would be able to monitor the casino operations in detail worthy of a television drama - casino operators would have to understand that they would lose some privacy in exchange for being allowed to profit from gambling operations here, since the state would be able to check their bank accounts, etc., without the usual legal hurdles.

Gambling Industry Optimistic About Future, Looking to Florida

Meanwhile, industry insider Peter Amsel reported last week that the recent three-day Global Gaming Expo (G2E) found gaming industry leaders excited about the future, with a whopping 77% of those surveyed believing that 2012 would be better than 2011, and 80% thinking that their industry would "kick into a higher gear" in 2012.

And, the eyes of the gaming industry are looking at Florida. Specifically, there is a lot of interest not only in what Genting is accomplishing here, but what the Las Vegas Sands will be doing in Florida.

The Las Vegas Sands has been interested in Florida land development for awhile. Stories about the Las Vegas Sands wanting to invest in Miami with a Sands resort-type casino have been part of industry chatter for a long time now.

However, as Amsel points out, the recent ruling by the First District Court of Appeals that a voter referendum is not legally required before Florida legislation can okay casino gambling in the state means that the gambling industry's fires are stoked.

The debate now should not be whether there will be casino gambling, but what industry leaders will be developing Florida property into Florida casino resorts.