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## Casino foes slam growth proposal

Activists rally against plans for up to five Catskills facilities

By **JAMES M. ODATO**, Capitol bureau  
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ALBANY -- Two dozen anti-casino activists from across New York blasted Gov. George Pataki and Attorney General Eliot Spitzer for pushing what critics call an immoral, illegal expansion of gambling.

The group railed against the the governor's recent call for up to five casinos in the Catskills and the state's expanded lottery games, particularly video slot machines now found at some racetracks.

"This governor has made a policy choice that government services should be paid for from human frailty and suffering," said Assemblyman William Parment, D-Jamestown, a member of a coalition suing Pataki for allegedly violating the state constitution by allowing casinos in New York.

Pataki wants to allow five casinos in the Ulster-Sullivan counties region, instead of the three authorized under a 2001 law he shepherded through the Legislature. The governor wants to use the casinos to help settle all Native American land claims against the state.

Richard G. Geldard, a resident of Kerhonkson in Ulster County, said state leaders have "responded like sheep to a misguided governor's callous attempts to raise money the easy way instead of confronting the state's problems with imagination and fiscal discipline."

Others, including representatives of the Coalition Against Gambling in New York and the National Coalition Against Legalized Gambling, cited studies that show increased crime, bankruptcies, child and spousal abuse and gambling problems in areas where casinos arise. They also said the economy suffers in states where gambling is legalized and that gambling costs the government three times what it brings in.

Neil Murray, a lawyer handling the suit against Pataki, suggested Spitzer investigate whether the Division of Lottery is defrauding gamblers at racinos by offering video poker games on devices that offer no opportunity to play poker.

Spitzer last week defended casinos but said he hasn't decided how many would be appropriate.

Pataki's aides say the governor is proposing up to five in the Catskills as a way to get Congress to pass legislation dissolving all of the land claim suits from tribes.

Sen. John Bonacic, R-Mount Hope, whose Sullivan County district is targeted for tribal casinos, said there could be fewer than five, and that elected county officials will determine if plans proceed.

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