



HO-CHUNK NATION

PEOPLE OF THE BIG VOICE

Ho-Chunk Nation Wittenberg Expansion Facts

For over six months the Stockbridge-Munsee Tribe has been publicly opposing the Ho-Chunk Nation's casino remodeling and expansion project in the Village of Wittenberg Wisconsin. During this time the Stockbridge has released information that is inaccurate, misleading and incorrect. The Ho-Chunk Nation would like to take this opportunity to state what the facts are and to set the record straight.

First, Stockbridge, a few other tribes and some editorial boards have described the Wittenberg expansion as similar to the recent proposal to place a casino in Kenosha Wisconsin. This is comparing apples to oranges. The Kenosha proposal involved taking land into trust for a tribe whose reservation was over 300 miles away from the casino site. Under federal law, tribes can only conduct gaming on reservation or trust land that has been in trust before October 1988 with few exceptions. The Kenosha proposal would have fallen under one of those few exceptions which includes a lengthy and strenuous approval process.

The Ho-Chunk land in Wittenberg has been in trust since 1963 and the Nation **has been operating a casino at this location since 2008.**

The expansion is focused on the construction of a hotel and restaurant and is only increasing the number of gambling machines by approximately 250, up from the current 500. This is very similar (albeit much smaller) to what Stockbridge did in 2008 when it constructed a \$100 million expansion to its existing casino.

The Wittenberg area has been home to the Ho-Chunk Nation for many generations and thousands of years. There is no comparison between Wittenberg and Kenosha.

Second, the Ho-Chunk Nation's gaming facility in Wittenberg is designated by our Gaming Compact with the State of Wisconsin as an "Ancillary Facility". An "Ancillary Facility" is defined in our Gaming Compact as: *"...a facility where fifty percent or more of the lot coverage of the trust property upon which the facility is located, is used for a Primary Business Purpose other than gaming."* This simply means that the Nation cannot have just a casino located on a trust parcel designated as an Ancillary Facility, but must also have a non-gaming business located on the trust parcel and the gaming facility cannot not be larger than the non-gaming business. This is exactly what the Nation is doing. The new facility will have a hotel and restaurant as well as the existing convenience store in addition to the casino. The "lot coverage" of the non-gaming businesses at this site far exceeds the lot coverage of the casino.

Gaming compacts between the State and other tribes have different definitions of "Ancillary Facility" and this may have caused some confusion for Stockbridge, but it is very clear that the Ho-Chunk Nation is following its Compact to the letter.

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Few can argue that Indian gaming has not been beneficial to Wisconsin tribes, tribal members and the state as a whole. Gaming has reduced tribal unemployment, reduced the state's social service program rolls and allowed tribes to better provide for the general welfare of their tribal members.

Congress passed the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act in 1988 primarily to spur economic development and investment into reservations. The intent was to give tribes the tools necessary to become self-sufficient. Under federal law tribes were to, and are, using gaming revenues to run tribal governments including providing for the health and welfare needs of tribal members through health department programs and medical facilities, educational opportunities, employment training, social services programs, housing programs, court systems etc. Under many circumstances tribes have been able to replace functions once provided by the state and federal governments.

However, gauging the level of benefit for each individual tribe depends on two factors, the input and output of revenue. A tribe can only be considered successful if the amount of revenue it brings in from gaming can cover the cost of all of the programs and services necessary to meet the needs of its tribal members. Therefore, the larger the population of the tribe, typically the more revenue is needed.

Stockbridge has been portraying the Wittenberg expansion dispute as David versus Goliath. However, the Ho-Chunk Nation has over six times as many tribal members as Stockbridge does. That equates to six times the need that the Ho-Chunk Tribal government must contend with. The Wittenberg expansion is one way that the Nation can increase its revenue in order to provide basic human services for its membership.

Ho-Chunk also does not have a single, land-based reservation unlike Stockbridge and other tribes in the state. The Nation and its tribal members are spread out over the southern half of Wisconsin, anchored by small trust and fee parcels that house the Nation's governmental, business and residential holdings. This adds tremendously to the cost of providing essential governmental services to the Nation's tribal members.

Another additional cost the Ho-Chunk Nation has to bear that Stockbridge does not is the annual Gaming Compact payment to the State. Although the recent impact study released by Stockbridge is significantly flawed, according to it and the Stockbridge Gaming Compact, Ho-Chunk pays over twice the percentage that Stockbridge does for its annual payment. Ho-Chunk pays 5% annually and Stockbridge pays only 2.25%.

The Ho-Chunk Nation is very proud of the strides it has taken to provide a better life for its tribal members and the positive impact it has had on the communities where it has a presence. The improvements being done at its Wittenberg facility will create more jobs and have numerous positive economic spin-off effects for local vendors and residents in the Wausau/Wittenberg area. Improvements include a new 86 room hotel, new 84 seat restaurant, a remodeled snack bar, a remodeled casino bar, 250 new slot machines, and 10 new eTable games. Completion of the project is scheduled for December 18, 2017.

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