

Casino Advocates Refuse To Fold On Arkansas Ballot Hopes

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[Tony Batt, GamblingCompliance](#) [1]

The July 6 deadline has come and gone, but that has not stopped a Texas businessman and a professional gambler from still trying to put their competing versions of a casino expansion referendum on the Arkansas ballot in November.

“I don’t think the fat lady has sung yet,” said Nancy Todd, a poker player who is seeking exclusive rights to open casinos in four Arkansas counties.

Secretary of State Mark Martin on Wednesday rejected Todd’s proposal for a constitutional amendment to allow casinos in Arkansas.

Martin upheld a challenge by the Stop Casinos Now group, which claimed Todd did not adequately explain the scope of her proposal. Stop Casinos Now is funded by the Southland Park greyhound track in West Memphis, Arkansas.

Todd downplayed the setback, saying she will provide the necessary information next week along with the 78,133 signatures required to get on the ballot. As of Wednesday, the secretary of state’s office had certified 23,616 of Todd’s signatures.

Meanwhile, the Arkansas Supreme Court will hear arguments on September 5 in a lawsuit by Michael Wasserman of Gainesville, Texas, who is seeking exclusive rights to build casinos in seven Arkansas counties.

Wasserman sued after Arkansas election officials decided last month he did not have enough signatures to make the ballot in November.

“Frankly, I don’t know if there will be enough time after the court’s ruling for my referendum to get on the ballot this year,” said Wasserman, who owns a communications firm.

One thing that is clear is that Todd and Wasserman are not allies.

“Nancy Todd is all about Nancy Todd,” Wasserman said. “She wants to bring poker palaces to Arkansas and Arkansans do not like poker. I want to bring casinos to the state to increase tourism.”

Todd, who moved to the state capital of Little Rock in January, said Wasserman has been trying for many years to build casinos in Arkansas and never succeeded.

“His proposal is weak and not as credible as mine,” Todd said.

Even if Arkansas does not allow either Todd or Wasserman to put a casino referendum on the ballot in November, University of Arkansas Law Professor Brian Gallini said their efforts may prove to be a harbinger.

“After all, if there was no market for what they’re proposing, then both Wasserman and Todd presumably would have long ago moved on,” he said. “The fact that the issue is still lingering very much suggests that it is not only viable but possibly picking up steam.”





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