

Chairwoman of Upper Sioux challenges governor to debate

ST. PAUL (AP) - Helen Blue-Redner, chairwoman of the Granite Falls-based Upper Sioux tribe, has challenged Gov. Tim Pawlenty to a debate on tribal gambling issues.

"You tell your side, make your accusations, and make us look as bad as you can," she wrote in a letter to Pawlenty. "We'll tell our side - and we'll tell the truth."

Dan McElroy, the governor's chief of staff, said Pawlenty was "disappointed in the tone of the letter." But, McElroy added, "he welcomes the opportunity to have a discussion with the

chairman and all Indian leaders, and he will take under advisement her invitation to debate."

It's the latest twist in a series of developments between Pawlenty and the various tribes over casino funds this year.

A group representing American Indian bands that run casinos in Minnesota earlier accused Pawlenty of distorting revenue figures to increase pressure on them to share profits with the state.

Pawlenty's administration last month released a report saying as much as \$10

billion is wagered each year in Minnesota, contributing to casino profits of about \$1.4 billion.

The Minnesota Indian Gaming Association said Pawlenty was failing to say that the figure isn't adjusted for prize payouts and operating expenses.

Pawlenty has said the numbers are based on the best information available.

Blue-Redner said in her letter to Pawlenty that she was upset he didn't visit the reservation last week during a trip to nearby Willmar, during which he talked about the issue.

Summit aims to raise cancer awareness

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) - Health statistics show that once diagnosed with cancer, American Indians have a lower five-year survival rate than any other group in the country.

Organizers of the Northern Plains American Indian Cancer Summit, which begins Tuesday in Rapid City, hope raising awareness of the disease will help reverse that statistic.

"Part of it is due to lack of information, lack of access to high levels of health care, less access to treatment and underfunding of the Indian Health system," said Dr. Jeff Henderson, president and CEO of the Black Hills Center for American Indian Health in Rapid

City. Cancer researchers, tribal leaders, health departments and health care professionals from North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska and Iowa will gather at the Ramkota Hotel and Conference Center Tuesday and Wednesday to address the issue of how to better inform the Indian population about cancer.

Carole Anne Heart, executive director of the Aberdeen Area Tribal Chairman Health Board, said the summit will provide information on prevention and treatment.

The summit is the first of its kind to gather 18 tribes from the four states,

along with state and national organizations.

"It's a historic event, because nothing of its kind has been promoted in this part of the country," she said.

Cancer is the third leading cause of deaths for Native Americans, behind unintentional death and heart disease, according to the CDC National Center for Health Statistics, 2002.

Heart said American Indians can lower their risk with something as simple as making the right dietary choices. "We want people to be really aware of cancer and to manage their own health," she said.

Supreme Court won't disturb Indian gaming

WASHINGTON (AP) - The Supreme Court last week sidestepped a dispute over tribal gambling, a victory for California tribes and their new high-profile supporter, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Justices refused to consider whether states can let tribes operate casinos while barring others from this enterprise. More than 20 states allow tribes to run gambling businesses, but not private companies, the court was told.

Nebraska does not allow casino gambling. The Santee Sioux and Winnebago tribes both operate casinos on their tribal property that feature legal bingo-style games.

Two November ballot proposals would allow casino gambling games such as blackjack, slot machines and roulette wheels for the first time in Nebraska. If either passes, the state's four tribes could enter into compacts with Nebraska to offer the Las Vegas-style casino games.

The appeal had been filed this past spring by four San Francisco-area card clubs and some charity organizations. They contended that California tribes were wrongly given a \$6 billion a year monopoly on gambling.

Since then, Schwarzenegger has banked on an expansion in Indian gambling to help the state's ailing finances. In August, he announced agreements with five Indian tribes to add thousands of new slot machines statewide and create one of the world's largest casinos in the heart of the Bay Area. Plans for that urban Indian casino have been scaled back because of criticism over the size.

California voters agreed in 2000 to change the state's constitution to permit tribes to operate casinos. Some gambling is allowed by private companies, but American Indians have a monopoly on Las Vegas-style gaming, like slot machines and blackjack.

The San Francisco-based 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals had ruled that giving Indians special gambling rights is not racial discrimination, saying tribes have special privileges because they are regarded as sovereign nations under the law.

The Bush administration had urged the high court to reject the appeal, arguing that Congress never said that states that allow tribal gambling must open gambling to others as well.

The stakes in the case were high. James Hamilton, a lawyer for the group challenging Indian gambling in California, told justices that Schwarzenegger's compacts with the tribes would give them exclusive rights to unlimited slot machines until the year 2030.

He said the court should intervene "before tribal monopolies become an entrenched feature of American life."

Besides California, he told justices that other states allowing limited gambling are Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Idaho, Kansas, Maine, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Texas, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

The case is *Artichoke Joe's v. Norton*, 03-1602.

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