

## Panel to probe relationship between casinos, regulators

INDIANAPOLIS (AP)—A state commission plans to examine whether regulators are allowing casino operators to build new riverboats that are more like buildings than boats, a legislator said.

"We have a couple riverboats here in Indiana that are expanding significantly—approximately doubling in size," said State Rep. Scott Pelath, D-Michigan City. "I believe that's something that should be allowed by the Legislature and not by a regulatory agency."

Pelath, who leads the Administrative Rules Oversight Commission, said the panel this fall will investigate whether the Indiana Gaming Commission has become too lenient with casinos.

Ernie Yelton, the gaming commission's director, said the agency has simply followed existing law and he looked forward to answering the oversight panel's questions.

"We feel we've been in total compliance with Indiana law," he said. "If people believe there should be a different application, then there should be different laws."

During the past session, lawmakers considered but did not approve a measure that would have permitted riverboat casinos to pay a \$25 million fee to go from a riverboat to a barge—allowing them to more cheaply build bigger facilities on platforms instead of boats.

At issue now is whether new building standards recently approved by the gaming commission will allow Argosy Casino in

Lawrenceburg and Horseshoe Hammond in Lake County to build new casinos more like buildings than boats.

Representatives from both casinos have said that the vessels under construction will be "navigable," which is what Yelton says is necessary to meet state law. But Pelath remains unconvinced. The Courier-Journal of Louisville, Ky., reported in a Saturday story.

Blue Chip Casino at Michigan City, which is in Pelath's district, sought legislative approval for a barge so it could more easily expand to compete with an Indian casino in southern Michigan. But lawmakers declined, so the casino built a new boat under the former construction standards that were set by the Coast Guard.

The General Assembly

granted the gaming commission power to write new standards after the Coast Guard notified states that it likely would stop certifying boats in places where they remained docked at all times.

Yelton said the new standards were largely based on those used by the Coast Guard, with changes due to safety concerns because the boats no longer cruise. Below the water, Yelton said, the standards remain virtually unchanged.

Yelton said the companies were warned that they would be required to meet the new standards when they started construction before they were adopted. The casinos were building "at their own risk," he said. "They wouldn't be grandfathered in."

Argosy and Horseshoe both

were using a consultant who also was helping the commission write its standards. Representatives of both casinos have said that they didn't know exactly what the new standards would be until they were approved and that they were prepared to make changes in their projects if necessary.

Mike Smith, executive director of the Casino Association of Indiana, said the legislative probe could make gambling companies question whether to do business in the state or make them consider the regulatory environment too unstable.

That could hurt state revenues, he said.

"Every time they (the casinos) improve their properties, the state is (among the beneficiaries of that expansion)," Smith said. "The two projects

under way right now in Hammond and Lawrenceburg are expected to increase state revenue by \$80 (million) to \$100 million a year. That's a pretty good benefit to the state."

Pelath said that's why it's important to know whether the gaming commission is going too far to help companies expand. He also wants to know whether the gaming commission's seven members or its staff are making the decisions at the agency, and how involved the governor's office is in those decisions.

"It's my assessment that the riverboats have gotten too powerful in Indiana," said Pelath.

## American Indian dancers keep it real

CHEYENNE, Wyo. (AP)—Sandi Iron Cloud's face bears a harried expression.

In ankle-length purple trade cloth, Sandi, the head of the Little Sun Drum and Dance Group at the Cheyenne Frontier Days Indian Village, flips through her cell phone making one call after another Friday morning.

One of her dancers has been bitten by a spider and is headed home.

The dancer sits at the picnic table with her head resting on her arm. Sandi rubs her back as she talks on the phone.

Other dancers gather under the shelter, drying off after being flooded out from rain. Some even had to camp out in the army.

They all look a little tired. But even after a night of drenching rain, spider bites and missing dancers—Sandi's still got some spunk left.

"You know what? We're going to make due with what we have today," she says. "We're survivors."

Sandi watches as dancers filter in.

"We're not just here to act out a routine," she says. "For us it's not just being an Indian for one day. ... We're real people. We have real jobs and real homes."

They have about an hour until their first performance, one of three that they give during the day at the Indian Village in Frontier Park. The weather has wreaked havoc on the grounds, and CFD volunteers have been pumping out water since about 5 a.m.

Kalen Sun Road walks in, a little worked up after being held up by a CFD security guard. This is the second time this week.

It doesn't take him long to forget it, though. His wife, Trace Sun Road, pulls out a comb and a bottle of hairspray.

He closes his eyes as she tips his head back, making a straight

part down the middle of his head. She braids each side and then wraps them in cloth.

Both are dancers for the Little Sun Drum and Dance Group. Kalen performs in the men's chicken dance and Trace in the fancy shawl dance.

"We brought quality dancers here," Sandi says watching. "To do something of this magnitude, we had to recruit other family groups."

The group began about 19 years ago. They took the Indian name of Sandi's grandfather, Paul Moss Sr.

"We carry on that memory," Sandi says.

It's a tight-knit group. Many are teachers, coaches, students, athletes and former graduates from Wyoming Indian High School. Some hold pretty prestigious athletic titles within the state in sports like track, basketball and cross-country.

Sandi says part of their goal is to dispel stereotypes.

"I could care less what term is politically correct. I know who I am," she says. "I'm proud to be an Arapaho. I'm proud to be an Indian."

She moves to the middle of the shelter, shouting to the dancers.

"Everybody has 15 minutes!" she says.

They are running a bit behind today and people hustle to get ready. The outfits of the group vary according to dance. Many are passed down through generations.

Trace's outfit is intricately beaded with Shoshone roses, which stand out on the white background. The beadwork was done by her grandmother.

Sandi steps into line. Savannah Martinez and Jaci Iron Cloud step up beside her, slipping their small hands in hers.

The drums begin to beat. As they approach the entrance, they begin to move with them, their feet tapping ever-so-slightly as they file into the grassy circle.

## 2 women first to hold elected office in Catawba tribe

ROCK HILL, S.C. (AP)—Melissa Funderburk and Leigh Anne Bickett hope their precedent-setting election will help them lead the Catawba Indian Nation back to its foundations.

The pair became the first Catawba women to win an elected office when they won seats on the tribe's executive committee July 21.

They join new chief Donald Rodgers, assistant chief Gene Blue, secretary/treasurer Jason Harris and fellow committee members Butch Sanders and John Williford as the top decision-makers for the tribe.

One woman—Frances Wade—served on the committee in 1973, but she was appointed to the office.

Tribe historians claim a group of women once made key

decisions and the chief was a figurehead. But European settlers moving into the Carolinas 400 years ago refused to trade or conduct affairs with Catawba women.

"They (Catawba women) saw that the Europeans wouldn't work with us," Funderburk said. "In order to sustain ourselves and survive, we had to put our men at the table to negotiate."

Since then, men have dominated politics for the Catawbas, the state's only federally recognized Indian tribe.

"It just proves that our tribe is moving with the times. It's a wonderful way to say, 'Women don't just cook and clean anymore. They're running our tribe,'" said Bickett, a 28-year-old housing manager for ISWA Development, the tribe's hous-

ing company. "I'm very honored, and I'm up for the challenge to work with all these men."

Rodgers said Funderburk and Bickett, a Chester resident who is the only committee member not living on or near the reservation, will bring balance to the decision-making.

"After European contact, the men went out and did things on their own," he said. "Unfortunately, sometimes it was to their own detriment."

Funderburk, 37, is program director for the early childhood education program Catawba Head Start. She also is a former social services worker on the reservation.

"I'm honored that so many people have put their confidence in me," she said. "I think people

respect me and expect me to do good things here. I've walked the talk."

The tribe faces many challenges, particularly finding ways to make up for lost income in its bingo operations since the state began running a lottery.

"Everybody thinks I'm crazy for taking this on," Funderburk said. "But I have a lot of love and compassion for my people, and I obtained an education in order to help my people."

Bickett said changes are on the way, including operating more in public view.

"Our tribe has been in disarray for so long. We want to build trust in this new group," she said. "It's gonna take all seven of us working as a team to bring peace. We no longer have to be behind closed doors."

## Grandmothers from around world pursue spirit of the environment

HOT SPRINGS, S.D. (AP)—Several times a day over three days, 13 women from around the world, several in their 80s, gathered around an open fire as each led a prayer ceremony unique to her native tribe.

After each outdoor gathering they moved into a convention center auditorium, where they exchanged ideas and learned about problems that plague the Oglala Lakota who live on the nearby Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

Among them: high unemployment, suicide, domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, diabetes and contaminated water.

The women share a common vision and mission to spare future generations problems that now vex much of society.

"It's hard to be proud of your cultural heritage and traditions if every day you face extinction," Debra White Plume of Manderson told the women.

The women, formally called

the International Council of Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers, come from Africa, Asia and the Americas. Their languages, cultures and traditions are as different as their lands.

"They're not women of politics. They're women of prayer," said Jeneane Prevatt of The Center for Sacred Studies in Sonora, Calif., who goes by the name Jyoti.

The indigenous grandmothers hope to ease war, pollution and social ills by teaching traditional ways that served their people long before the birth of modern peace and environmental movements.

Roughly every six months, they visit each other's homelands, most recently in June here in the southern Black Hills, near the Pine Ridge reservation that's home to two of the women, sisters Rita and Beatrice Long Visitor Holy Dance.

During the prayer ceremonies, they spoke very little. Often the only sounds were the

crackling fire and traffic on a nearby road.

"We're praying for peace, which is not only the wars but in our homes and in the schools. We need that peace amongst children," said Beatrice Long Visitor Holy Dance, who believes social problems on the reservation are a direct result of people abandoning traditional ways of life.

The group first met in October 2004 in New York. So far their effort has earned them a meeting with the Dalai Lama and a relationship with the Bioneers environmental group.

The 13 women next plan to meet in October at San Rafael, Calif., for the annual conference of the Bioneers, who share the indigenous grandmothers' belief that there's a spiritual aspect to life and more to environmentalism than preventing pollution, said Nina Simons, co-executive director.

"We will never have environ-

mental sanity and health while there are so many people living in abject poverty," she said. "We can't expect people to care about the environment when they're worried about feeding their children."

The grandmothers and Bioneers also believe that natural solutions can fix many modern problems, such as using a type of mushroom to digest petroleum spills, Simons said.

"Part of our challenge is to learn to have a relationship with nature that makes it healthier and stronger instead of weaker and depleted," she said.

The Black Hills conference attracted people from the United States, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Spain, France, New Zealand, Australia, Japan, Mexico, Sweden, Nepal and Brazil.

Among the roughly 250 people attending the gathering was Jan Rhine of Newberg, Ore., who was raised in Africa by missionary parents. She said the grandmothers movement makes her appreciate a simpler way of life.

## Thousands gather to vote on casino

MIDDLEBOROUGH, Mass. (AP)—Thousands of residents gathered in this rural community on Saturday to vote on a deal with the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe that could bring casino gambling to Massachusetts.

The massive Town Meeting, which was expected to draw as many as three quarters of

Middleborough's 20,000 residents, began Saturday on an athletic field behind the high school.

The town is considering a proposal by the Wampanoag to build a \$1 billion casino in Middleborough in exchange for \$250 million in infrastructure improvements and an estimated \$11 million in annual payments.

## Archaeological dig in Indiana reveals Indian artifacts

KOUTS, Ind. (AP)—Volunteers working with a University of Notre Dame archaeologist have unearthed tens of thousands of artifacts including relics from ancient American Indian tribes at a site along the Kankakee River.

The team has found arrowheads, pottery, archaic points, animal bones and even a small brass bell this summer, said Mark Schurr, chairman of Notre Dame's anthropology department.

Some of the artifacts date to 8,000 years ago, said Schurr,

who's in his fifth year of excavations at the Collier Lodge site south of Kouts, about 25 miles southeast of Gary.

"You never know what you're going to find. We found a new style of pottery that I've never seen before," he said.

The dig along the Kankakee River's tree-filled banks has yielded tens of thousands of artifacts from various time periods.