

# Florida House approves sports betting bill with Seminole Tribe; legal challenges expected

*Seminole gambling compact passes majority vote (97-17) by Florida House during a special session.*

FLORIDA, UNITED STATES, June 18, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Florida House approved a 30-year deal granting the Seminole Indian Tribe exclusive rights to operate sports betting in Florida on May 19, 2021. However, even though the [Tribal Gaming Compact](#) received bipartisan support in the legislature, it will undoubtedly face legal challenges by gambling opponents on both federal and state levels.



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*Governor Ron DeSantis*

With a sweeping win, the Florida Legislature voted 97-17 in favor of the compact that will generate an average of \$500 million per annum in tax revenue for the state of Florida. Furthermore, the Florida Senate approved the agreement in a 38-1 vote.

"With this new compact, the state will now see a large stream of reoccurring revenue to the tune of billions of dollars over the next few years," said Governor Ron DeSantis.

The state will also receive approximately \$2.5 billion over the next five years and an estimated \$20 billion throughout the 30-year deal.

The compact, which is essentially an agreement between Governor Ron DeSantis and the Seminole Tribe of Florida, has merit created under the [Indian Gaming Regulatory Act \(IGRA\)](#). This federal law governs agreements between Indian tribes and states authorizing online gambling on tribal land.

The IGRA stipulates that any gambling activity allowed through a compact must occur on a tribal reservation. However, the Florida-Seminole Gaming Compact permits online sports betting by users anywhere in Florida via mobile device, whether the user is off-site or physically located on an Indian reservation. Thus, this particular issue will be circumvented, in all likelihood, by placing the sports betting servers that process the bets on tribal land.

This particular issue presents two distinct challenges:

- The compact violates voter control provisions in Florida's Constitution

- IGRA does not authorize the compact.

Opposing Democrats argued that the compact violates Amendment 3 passed by voters in 2018. The constitutional amendment prevents the expansion of gambling outside of tribal lands without voter approval. They also questioned whether it would survive a legal challenge.

“Whatever happened to Amendment 3?” asked Democratic Rep. Anna Eskamani. “I thought that moving forward; the voters would approve any type of expansion of gambling.”

However, if the compact overcomes the legal challenges and receives federal approval, sports betting could operate legally from October 15, 2021.

The original [Florida-Seminole compact](#) gave the Tribe exclusive rights to slot machines and blackjack, while the Tribe paid Florida state several billion dollars. However, the Seminole Tribe of Florida is no longer obligated to abide by the 2010 compact. Under the new agreement, the Seminoles would operate sports betting along with roulette and craps.

“The breakdown of the 2010 compact has denied the state of Florida any revenue derived from the Seminole Tribe’s ongoing gaming operations — including what is the most profitable casino in the United States, located in Hillsborough County. This changes today,” DeSantis said in a statement issued by his office.

The new compact will contribute billions of dollars to the state’s coffers and expedite job creation in Florida. The agreement will create an estimated 2,000 jobs, which will boost the communities within the tribal territories and surrounding areas.

The compact is now before the Department of Interior for consideration. However, even if the Federal Department of the Interior dismisses the mobile sports betting clause, the remainder of the agreement may remain in force, giving the Tribe exclusive rights to in-person sports betting in Florida until 2051.

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