

Rep. Yuko's Casino Gaming and Workforce Development Act Approved by House

Legislation uses casino licensing fees to promote job creation in Ohio

COLUMBUS – Legislation sponsored by State Rep. Kenny Yuko (D-Cleveland) to provide regulatory framework for Ohio casinos was approved by the Ohio House this afternoon. The Casino Gaming and Workforce Development Act was passed by a vote of 69-27.

House Bill 519 is the implementation language required by the constitutional amendment that created four casinos and was passed by the voters of Ohio last November. It is jointly sponsored by Rep. Yuko and State Rep. Todd Book (D-McDermott).

“Through this bill we hope to ensure that casino gaming in Ohio is fair; that the Casino Control Commission operates with integrity; and that creating this industry means good jobs for Ohioans using Ohio products,” said Rep. Yuko. “By utilizing the casino licensing money for workforce development programs, we go far beyond the jobs simply created by the casinos and provide job skills for people all over the state.”

HB 519 distributes \$200 million in casino licensing fees to fund workforce development programs, including the Co-Op Internship program, Ohio's Workforce Guarantee program, the Urban Workforce initiative and the Build Your Own Business program.

HB 519 includes *Buy Ohio* language, requiring casino operators to submit an annual plan for buying goods and services from Ohio companies. Similar requirements are on the books in Iowa and Louisiana.

It also calls for casino operators to submit an annual plan that outlines their goals for diversity in construction, workplace development and professional services. While not requiring any specific hiring actions, the provision recognizes the importance of a diverse workforce and equal opportunity in hiring. Illinois, Missouri, Louisiana, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Indiana all have similar equal opportunity laws in their casino regulations.

The bill requires casinos to observe the same liquor control laws as every other business in Ohio. The legal drinking age of 21 applies, as well as prohibitions against free alcohol and sales are cut off at 2:30 a.m. Ohio's ban on indoor smoking will also be observed.

Additionally, the bill provides certain protections for charitable gaming for churches, veteran and fraternal organizations. Many of Ohio's bingo laws have not been updated in a number of years and these provisions ensure that our veteran and church organizations will have the ability to continue their fundraising activities.