



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Seneca Nation Reacts to NYS Assembly Decision to Ignore Compact Authorization Vote

ALLEGANY TERRITORY, SALAMANCA, N.Y. – The Seneca Nation is reacting to comments made by the leadership of the New York State Assembly regarding proposed legislation authorizing the State to enter into a gaming compact with the Nation.

Seneca Nation President Rickey Armstrong, Sr. issued the following statement:

“The Executive Chamber’s non-committal approach and the Assembly’s decision to place special interests over the benefits of this historic agreement at the eleventh hour is despicable.

The Seneca Nation announced an agreement with New York State that we believe represents a fair deal for everyone. The Governor's negotiating team spent 11 months negotiating the terms of this agreement. The parties arrived at an agreement that we believed was allowable under the federal Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, while still benefiting the State and, particularly, local communities. The Nation did so with terms that would still provide the Seneca Nation with fair value for what, even under new terms, would remain one of the highest exclusivity share payments in the country. The State Senate approved the deal overwhelmingly, recognizing the mutual benefits the agreement would provide to the State and the Nation.

Upon hearing that Rochester leaders were frustrated at their lack of understanding of the deal, apparently having been kept in the dark by their Executive, the Nation met with local Rochester leaders to address their concerns. The Nation promised to work together to site any future casino in a location that worked for local communities. And yet, the Nation's attempts to rectify that lack of understanding have fallen short, and the Nation is once

again reminded that Native Nations in the State of New York are secondary to corporate interests. By failing to advance this bill, the Assembly is telling the Seneca Nation we don't even deserve the opportunity to start those conversations.

The blame for keeping Rochester officials out of the loop lays directly at the feet of the Executive. The Executive and the Nation agreed not to negotiate through the press or in public, but contrary to media coverage, the parties never entered into a Non-Disclosure Agreement. The Nation regularly consulted our own legislative branch, and expected that the Executive was doing the same. The Executive's claim that it was legally barred from communicating with other State officials is simply inaccurate. The Executive was free to communicate with local officials throughout the process, on what it was negotiating for and what it agreed to. The failure of the Executive to communicate with its own government speaks to the utter disregard the Governor had for this process.

Over 20 years, the Seneca Nation's gaming operations have generated more than \$2 billion for the state and more than \$500 million for local governments – revenues that have been transformational for our partners in Niagara Falls, Salamanca and Buffalo. We employ thousands of Western New Yorkers, and have provided thousands of union construction jobs. A decision not to bring this legislation to a vote is a decision to allow our compact to expire. It is a decision to throw 5,000 Western New York jobs into peril. It is a decision to jeopardize the well-being of more than 8,000 Seneca individuals and families. And it is a decision to disregard federal law. The Seneca Nation will not sit idly by while the State once again fails its obligations to Native Nations.

The powers behind this decision should not be ignored. We were told that Governor Hochul recused herself, and yet, Finger Lakes Gaming, owned by Delaware North, led the charge to defeat the renewal of the Seneca Nation's compact. Their statement opposing the compact released on Monday is proof positive. Now, the greatest beneficiary of the Nation's expiring compact is Delaware North itself, as the company also operates Hamburg Gaming near Buffalo. Corporate executives at Delaware North will celebrate this Father's Day weekend, thankful that the State has once again protected their interests at the expense of a Native Nation.

The Nation is also disappointed that the Executive has been content to let its own deal die on the vine. Had this been a priority for them, we would

have seen statements of support for the bill, communications that the Nation-State compact is a priority, or applying the full weight of the Executive Branch. The Executive has been silent. The Executive Chamber's choice not to promote its own deal with the Seneca Nation speaks volumes -- Governor Hochul may have recused herself from negotiations, but apparently could not recuse her own staff from the expectation that they prioritize corporate interests, Delaware North first and foremost, over those of a sovereign Native Nation.

New York has spent the last several years expanding gaming, whether through new commercial casinos or opening up mobile sports betting to a billion dollars in wagers each year. The state has time and time again lowered the tax rate on the Seneca Nation's competitors, placing the Nation at a competitive disadvantage. Just this session the Legislature has approved millions in tax relief to racinos. All this has come at the expense of Indian gaming and the Seneca's gaming enterprises. Yet, when the time comes to consider a fair deal for the Seneca Nation, the state turns its back and finds any argument to protect well-connected, non-Indian gaming interests.

The Seneca Nation once again implores the Assembly to do what is right -- to ratify a hard-fought agreement that recognizes the right of the Seneca Nation to participate in gaming within its Aboriginal lands -- lands seized from the Nation and lands that it was forced from by New York itself. Failure to do so will cost the Seneca Nation, Western New York, and ultimately, New York State."