

Genting Continues Push For Florida Casino

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[Tony Batt, GamblingCompliance](#) [1]

A political action committee created in April by Genting already has raised and spent about \$600,000 to bolster efforts to open destination resort casinos in Miami and other Florida cities.

After its lobbying efforts in the Florida legislature during the last two years proved fruitless, Genting formed the committee known as New Jobs and Revenues for Florida.

The committee's goal is to come up with more options for bringing mega casinos to the Sunshine State, including putting [a referendum on the state ballot](#) [2] in 2014.

Two companies affiliated with Genting, a Malaysian conglomerate that owns major casinos in Malaysia and Singapore, and operates the Resorts World video lottery racino in New York, made the contributions of more than \$600,000.

The committee already has spent about \$558,000.

"We are just exploring options, and there is no decision on which direction to go," Brian Hughes, a spokesman for the committee, told GamblingCompliance.

"There is a continued economic challenge in Florida," Hughes said. "Florida is already a leading entertainment center, and we are exploring options for a pathway to add to the choices."

Hughes used to work in the press office of Republican Governor Rick Scott. He said he was hired by the committee as an independent media consultant.

The committee also has spent \$300,000 since April for the services of the consulting firm of Tony Fabrizio, a nationally renowned Republican strategist who is one of Governor Scott's key political advisers.

Another \$150,000 paid for the hiring of Fort Lauderdale Attorney Bruce Rogow, who represented the Seminole Tribe of Florida in a historic case before the United States Supreme Court in 1996. The Supreme Court ruled against the tribe, concluding states cannot be sued for refusing to negotiate Indian gaming compacts.

The committee also spent \$50,000 to hire National Voter Outreach, a Reno, Nevada-based firm that gathers petition signatures.

Genting's determination to open a destination resort casino in South Florida is underscored by its May 2011 purchase of prime Miami real estate for almost a half-billion dollars.

But Governor Scott, who is up for re-election in 2014, is unlikely to support a casino referendum on the state ballot in the same year, according to Bob Jarvis, a law professor at Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale.

"It seems pretty clear that even if they get it on to the 2014 ballot it won't be successful," Jarvis said, citing defeats of gambling referendums in 1978, 1986 and 1994.

"While Florida is becoming more pro-gambling, I just don't think we're there yet," he said.

Florida pari-mutuel lobbyist Mary Dunbar compared Genting's efforts to Sisyphus, the mythological king who was punished by being required to repeatedly roll a huge boulder up a hill only to watch it roll back down every time.

Noting Florida law requires a 60 percent majority to pass a referendum, Dunbar said, "I'm not sure of a gaming referendum anywhere in the country that has been able to achieve such a high state-wide vote in a state the size of Florida."

Bill Lerner, an analyst for Union Gaming in Las Vegas, also said Genting's efforts face a powerful array of opponents including Disney, the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association, the Seminole and Pompano Park racino operator [Isle of Capri Casinos](#) [3].



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