



Fresno Bee Letter to Editor

FRIDAY,
MAY 2, 2008

By Andrea Lynn Hoch

We are perplexed by The Bee's opposition to the tribal-state gaming compact recently signed by the North Fork Rancheria and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. The gaming facility proposed by the tribe has the support of the local community in which it will be located, and the compact includes strong protections for patrons, workers and the environment.

Contrary to assertions in your April 30 editorial, neither the tribe nor the governor is moving quickly to avoid scrutiny, nor has the proposal been "pushed" through. To the contrary, the project was announced by the tribe in early 2004, and the rigorous federal environmental review process was formally initiated and announced to the public in October 2004.

The federal draft environmental impact statement was issued in February of this year and made available for public comment. At the tribe's request, the governor will not present the compact to the Legislature for ratification until the federal government has made a determination to take the land into trust for the tribe. This ensures that the Legislature has a significant amount of time to scrutinize the agreement even before it is presented for ratification.

Governor responds to Bee's criticism of casino compact

The North Fork Compact and the accompanying compact with the Wiyot Tribe are a creative solution for avoiding construction of a casino in the Sierra foothills and on the Humboldt Coast. The project meets the criteria set forth in Gov. Schwarzenegger's May 2005 Proclamation on Indian Gaming Policy.

It has the support of the local government and the community, and it will not be located in an urban area, contrary to the assertion in your editorial.

The governor believes the North Fork and Wiyot compacts are a win-win for the tribes, the state and the local community. As with all of Gov. Schwarzenegger's compacts, this compact includes strong environmental protections that ensure that not only the initial construction but also any future modifications to the facility undergo a thorough environmental review process. In addition, the compact includes provisions that require the tribe to enter into agreements with Madera County and the California Department of Transportation that provide for mitigation of off-reservation impacts. There are many other innovative provisions in the compacts and we urge you to give them a closer look.

Andrea Lynn Hoch is the legal affairs secretary in the office of the governor.