

# California Senate approves major expansion for gambling tribes

The California Senate approved the largest expansion of Indian gambling in the state since tribes were given the authority to operate casinos. The agreements now go to the Assembly. If passed, tribes would be allowed to operate an additional 22,500 new slots, the equivalent of more than 10 Las Vegas-sized casinos.

It would represent a 50 percent increase in the number of slots currently operating in the state's Indian casinos. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, who negotiated the agreements with the tribes last year, is counting on the Legislature to approve the compacts by mid-May to help balance his spending plan for the budget year that begins in July.

He is relying on tribes installing thousands of the slot machines within months and beginning to pay the state USD 500 million annually in casino winnings to close the state's chronic budget deficit. The state's nonpartisan budget analyst has said such expectations are unrealistic and that the state may not see significant revenue from the compacts for years.

The compacts approved Thursday are for five Southern California tribes that already have casinos and one tribe in far Northern California that has tried for years to get state authorization for a gambling hall.

The deals allow the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians to more than double – from 2,000 to 5,000 – the total number of slot machines and other games it operates at its two casinos in Palm Springs and Rancho Mirage.

The Sycuan Band of the Kumeyaay Nation in San Diego would be

allowed to increase the number of machines it operates from 2,000 to 5,000. The Morongo Band of Mission Indians northwest of Palm Springs, the Pechanga Band of Luiseno Indians in Temecula and the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians in San Bernardino would be allowed to more than triple – to 7,500 – the number of slot machines they operate.

In exchange, the state expects to collect billions of dollars over the compacts' 30-year span.

The Senate also approved a much smaller gambling agreement with the Yurok Indians, a 5,000-member tribe that is the state's largest but also among its poorest. The Yuroks will be allowed to install up to 99 slot machines at their reservation near Klamath in Del Norte County, most of which lacks electricity.