

# Vegas-style slots arrive in Florida

Hollywood, Florida – Purse in hand and eyeglasses on, 80-year-old Ruth Spivak stood behind a velvet rope just steps away from the bright lights, musical chiming and big jackpots.

Las Vegas-style slot machines have come to Florida, and Spivak was one of hundreds who showed up Monday to feed dollar bills or casino debit cards into the 800 new machines at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel and Casino.

„I want to try the machines and win money, like I do in Las Vegas,“ said Spivak, who said she goes to the gambling capital about twice a year and hoped to win a „couple hundred dollars“ Monday. She woke up at 7:30 a.m. and came down to this Fort Lauderdale suburb from Delray Beach to get into position.

The machines debuted because of an agreement between Gov. Charlie Crist and Seminole Tribe of Florida’s leaders that went into effect just weeks ago. Sought by the tribe for years, the deal allows expanded gambling for Vegas-style games such as slots, blackjack and baccarat at its seven Florida casinos.

Vegas-style players compete against the house rather than each other, a feature of the bingo-style already available at Seminole casinos.

Crist’s agreement was challenged by House Speaker Marco Rubio and Senate President Ken Pruitt, who said lawmakers must approve any agreement he negotiates. The Florida Supreme Court is scheduled to hear arguments about whether the compact is valid on Wednesday.

„We believe that without appropriate legislative review and approval, the compact authorizing the Seminoles to expand gambling is invalid,“ Rubio said in a statement e-mailed to

The Associated Press.

State leaders have said they did not expect the tribe to begin operating the slots so quickly.

„When the compact went into the Federal Register it became law that we're allowed to offer (Vegas-style) devices,“ said Jim Allen, CEO of Seminole Gaming. „Obviously, we placed our orders immediately.“

Allen said two Nevada-based slots manufacturers, International Gaming Technology and Bally Technologies Inc., delivered the machines „in weeks, when it usually takes months.“

As part of the compact, Florida has already received a USD 50 million payment from the tribe and is guaranteed USD 100 million in the first year. The state's share is set to increase to up to USD 150 million by the third year of the agreement, and after that will be based on revenues. Many expect the state's share to quickly add up to billions of dollars.

The tribe plans to install up to 15,000 slot machines around the state, though it will take some time to get them installed at its other six facilities.