

Senate Committee on Governmental Organization
Informational Hearing
Fifth Amendment to the Tribal-State Compact Between the State of California and the
Picayune Rancheria of Chukchansi Indians of California

August 11, 2026 – 9:00 a.m.
Suite 1200, 1021 O Street

Compact Overview

SUMMARY

On June 11, 2026, the State of California agreed to a one-year extension with the Picayune Rancheria of Chukchansi Indians of California (hereafter “Tribe”), which is still operating under their original 1999 compact, to allow the Tribe to operate under the terms of their 1999 compact until December 31, 2027.

The State of California in 1999 and 2000 entered into over 60 tribal-state gaming compacts with tribes in California pursuant to the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA). These compacts are collectively referred to as the 1999 Compacts. The 1999 Compacts were for an initial 20-year term, with a termination date of December 31, 2020. However, the 1999 Compacts included an automatic 18-month extension to June 30, 2022. Four years ago, the State of California agreed to an additional 18-month compact extension with approximately 26 tribes that allowed them to operate under the terms of their 1999 compact until December 31, 2023. Three years ago, the State of California agreed once again to a one-year compact extension with 22 tribes who are still operating under their original 1999 compacts to allow them to operate under the terms of their 1999 compacts until December 31, 2024. Two years ago, the State of California once again agreed to a one-year compact extension with three tribes, including the Picayune Rancheria of Chukchansi Indians of California, which allowed these tribes to operate under the terms of their 1999 compacts until December 31, 2025. Last year, the State once again agreed to a one-year extension with the Picayune Rancheria of Chukchansi Indians of California, which allowed the tribe to continue to operate under the terms of their 1999 compact until December 31, 2026. A majority of the tribes with 1999 Compacts now have new compacts, but there are a handful of tribes that are still operating under the 1999 Compacts.

The 1999 Compacts allow, but do not require, the State and a tribe to amend the term of the Tribe’s 1999 Compact by mutual and written agreement. To be effective, an amendment solely to extend the term of a 1999 Compact requires ratification by the California Legislature, but it does not require approval by the Secretary pursuant to 25 Code of Federal Regulations section 293.5.

The amendment to extend the 1999 Compacts until December 31, 2027, would not preclude the State and the 1999 Compact tribes from agreeing to further extensions should both agree it is appropriate.

The Picayune Rancheria of Chukchansi Indians of California are a federally recognized Indian tribe established by executive order in 1988 by the United States Government. The Picayune Rancheria, founded in 1912 and located in Coarsegold, California, covers 160 acres in Madera County and serves as the tribal land.

Today the Tribe operates the Chukchansi Gold Resort and Casino in Coarsegold, California. According to the casino's internet website, patrons can immerse themselves "in the dynamic atmosphere of our Firehouse Lounge and directly in front of California Market Buffet, where high-energy gaming awaits in a smoke-free haven." The casino boasts a 73,000 square-foot gaming floor and features 2,000 slot machines as well as a selection of 40 table games. Additionally, the facilities include 20 electric vehicle charging stations on the first and fourth floors of the parking garage.

The vehicle identified for providing the constitutionally required legislative ratification of these amendments to the tribal-state gaming compact is SB 1235 (Rubio).

EXISTING LAW

Existing law provides, under IGRA, for the negotiation and conclusion of compacts between federally recognized Indian tribes and the state for the purpose of conducting Class III gaming activities on Indian lands within a state as a means of promoting tribal economic development, self-sufficiency, and strong tribal governments. Existing law expressly authorizes a number of tribal-state gaming compacts between the State of California and specified Indian tribes.

Existing law authorizes the conduct of Class III gaming activities to the extent such activities are permitted by state law, a gaming compact has been concluded by a federally recognized tribe and the state, and the compact has been approved by the Secretary of the Interior.

Existing law limits the operation of Class III gaming activities to Indian lands acquired on or before October 17, 1988. Existing law also provides for certain exceptions to conduct gaming activities on Indian lands acquired after October 17, 1988.

Existing law defines Indian lands to mean all lands within the limits of any Indian reservation, and any land which is either held in trust by the United States for the benefit of any Indian tribe or individual, or held by any Indian tribe or individual subject to restriction by the United States against alienation and over which an Indian tribe exercises governmental power.

Existing law requires the state to negotiate and to conclude a compact in good faith with an Indian tribe having jurisdiction over the Indian lands upon which the Class III gaming activity is

to be conducted. Existing law also provides the United States district courts with jurisdiction over any cause of action initiated by a tribal government alleging that the state failed to negotiate in good faith to conclude a compact. Furthermore, existing law prescribes the remedy, mediation supervised by the courts, if it is found that the state failed to negotiate in good faith to conclude a compact.

Existing law authorizes the Governor, under the California Constitution, to negotiate and conclude compacts, subject to ratification by the Legislature.

BACKGROUND

Indian Gaming Regulatory Act

In 1988, Congress enacted IGRA to provide a statutory basis for the operation and regulation of gaming on Indian lands. IGRA provides that an Indian tribe may conduct gaming activity on Indian lands if the activity “is not specifically prohibited by federal law and is conducted within a State which does not prohibit such gaming activity.”

IGRA distinguishes between three classes of gaming (Class I, Class II, and Class III) and provides for different forms of regulation for each class. Class I gaming includes “social games” for minor prizes or “traditional forms of Indian gaming.” Class II gaming is defined to include bingo and card games that are explicitly authorized by the laws of the state, or that are not explicitly prohibited by the laws of the state and are played at any location in the State, so long as the card games are played in conformity with those laws and regulations. Class III gaming includes such things as slot machines, casino games, and banked card games such as black jack and baccarat. Class III gaming may only be conducted under terms of a compact negotiated between an Indian tribe and a State.

IGRA was enacted against a legal background in which Indian tribes and individuals generally are exempt from state taxation within their own territory. IGRA provides that with the exception of assessments permitted under the statute, to defray the State’s costs of regulating gaming activity, IGRA shall not be interpreted as conferring upon a State authority to impose any tax, fee, charge, or other assessment upon an Indian tribe to engage in Class III activity. Nor may a State refuse to enter into negotiations based on the lack of authority to impose such a tax, fee, charge, or other assessment.

When a tribe requests negotiations for a Class III compact, IGRA requires the State to negotiate with the Indian tribe in good faith. IGRA provides a comprehensive process to prevent an impasse in compact negotiations, which is triggered when a tribe files suit alleging that the State has refused to negotiate or has failed to negotiate in good faith.

Before 2000, the California Constitution prohibited Class III gaming. In 2000, California voters approved Proposition 1A, which had been proposed by the Governor and passed by the

Legislature. Proposition 1A amended the California Constitution to permit the Governor to negotiate compacts with federally recognized Indian tribes for certain Class III gaming activities. Because non-Indian parties were still forbidden from operating gaming facilities, Proposition 1A granted Indian tribes a “constitutionally protected monopoly on most types of Class III games in California.”

Brief History and Background – The Picayune Rancheria of Chukchansi Indians of California

The Picayune Rancheria of Chukchansi Indians of California are a federally recognized Indian tribe established by executive order in 1988 by the United States Government. The Picayune Rancheria, founded in 1912 and located in Coarsegold, California, covers 160 acres in Madera County and serves as the tribal land.

The Tribal Government is organized democratically and operates in accordance with the customs and traditions of the Chukchansi people. The Chukchansi Tribal Government is composed of the Tribal Council, and various boards, commissions, corporations, and committees. The Tribal Government’s primary decision-making authority is the Tribal Council, comprised of elected tribal members 18-years of age and older.

The Chukchansi people are one of the original inhabitants of what now is called California. The Chukchansi have inhabited the fringes of the San Joaquin Valley and the foothills of the Sierra Nevada for more than 12,000 years. During the years after the Gold Rush, anthropologists visited the land of the Chukchansi. They grouped California Tribes together by their languages; hence, the Chukchansi are grouped with approximately 60 other Tribes in the greater Central Valley. Those groups had (and still do have) similar cultures, and speak the same language, but had different dialects.

These people were referred to by early researches as “Yokuts,” meaning “people.” However, there is no Yokut Tribe, and each Tribe had its own name and its own traditional use areas.

After contact with the Spanish missionaries, European explorers, American trappers and gold miners, the original indigenous population was weakened, disturbed, and displaced. The introduction of diseases that the Native people had no immunity to caused waves of depopulation. By 1900, it is estimated that approximately 85% – 90% of all California Indians “disappeared.” The discovery of gold in the mid-19th century brought thousands of foreigners in search of wealth. Under American rule at the time, Native people had no legal rights. Their lands were taken away from them and their way of life was changed forever. These landless Indians went to work as farm laborers, miners, cowboys, and loggers, etc. Women were often domestic workers or worked in the fields. By 1902, the Federal government began to set aside land for the landless Indians and created “Rancherias.”

Years later, as a result of a successful class action suit, (Tillie Hardwick, et al. v. US government, et al.), the Picayune Rancheria of the Chukchansi Indians' federal status was restored by the government in 1983 and became a Federally Recognized Tribe. The Chukchansi remained landless, however, until recent years when they borrowed money to purchase land that had originally been part of their homeland. Allotted lands that survived into the 1950s have, for the most part, remained with the families of the original allottees. Since that time, the Tribe continues to make great strides towards sustainable economic development and expansion of its infrastructure development.

Today the Tribe operates the Chukchansi Gold Resort and Casino in Coarsegold, California. According to the casino's internet website, patrons can immerse themselves "in the dynamic atmosphere of our Firehouse Lounge and directly in front of California Market Buffet, where high-energy gaming awaits in a smoke-free haven." The casino boasts a 73,000 square-foot gaming floor and features 2,000 slot machines as well as a selection of 40 table games. Additionally, the facilities include 20 electric vehicle charging stations on the first and fourth floors of the parking garage.

SUPPORT

None received

OPPOSITION

None received

PRIOR AND CURRENT LEGISLATION

SB 49 (Grove, Chapter 3, Statutes of 2025) ratified the tribal-state gaming compact between the State of California and the Big Sandy Rancheria of Western Mono Indians of California, executed on December 12, 2024. This bill also ratified the third and fourth amendment to the 1999 tribal-state gaming compact between the State of California and the Tribe.

SB 864 (Padilla, Chapter 244, Statutes of 2025) ratifies the Tribal-State Gaming Compact between the State of California and the Cher-Ae Heights Indian Community of the Trinidad Rancheria, California, executed on July 11, 2025. The bill also ratifies two separate amendments to the tribal-state gaming compacts entered into between the State of California and the Pinoleville Pomo Nation, California, and the Sycuan Band of Kumeyaay Nation.

AB 1527 (Soria, Chapter 137, Statutes of 2025) ratifies the fourth amendment to the tribal-state gaming compact entered into between the State of California and the Picayune Rancheria of Chukchansi Indians of California, executed on June 4, 2025.

SB 931 (Dodd, Chapter 320, Statutes of 2024) ratified four separate tribal-state gaming compacts between the State of California and the Campo Band of Diegueno Mission Indians of the Campo

Indian Reservation, California, the La Posta Band of Diegueno Mission Indians of the La Posta Indian Reservation, California, the Timbisha Shoshone Tribe, and the Elem Indian Colony of Pomo Indians of the Sulphur Band of Rancheria, California. Additionally, the bill ratified three separate amendments to the tribal-state gaming compacts entered into between the State of California and the Augustine Band of Cahuilla Indians, California, the Picayune Rancheria of Chukchansi Indians of California, and the Cher-Ae Heights Indian Community of the Trinidad Rancheria, California.

AB 2032 (Jim Patterson, Chapter 304, Statutes 2024) ratified the tribal-state gaming compact between the State of California and the Big Sandy Rancheria of Western Mono Indians, executed on January 16, 2024.

AB 2656 (Ramos, Chapter 313, Statutes of 2024) ratified the tribal-state gaming compact between the State of California and the Table Mountain Rancheria, executed on November 1, 2023.

AB 3276 (Ramos, Chapter 319, Statutes of 2024) ratified the tribal-state gaming compact between the State of California and the Tule River Tribe, executed on June 25, 2024.

SB 771 (Dodd, Chapter 888, Statutes of 2023) ratified the tribal state gaming compacts between the state of California and between the State of California and the Cahto Tribe of the Laytonville Rancheria, the Ewiiapaayp Band of Kumeyaay Indians, California, the Manchester Band of Pomo Indians of the Manchester Rancheria, California, the Resighini Rancheria, and the Sherwood Valley Rancheria of Pomo Indians of California, as specified.

SB 736 (McGuire, Chapter 11, Statutes of 2023) ratified the amendment to the existing tribal-state gaming compact entered into between the State of California and the Middletown Rancheria of Pomo Indians of California, executed on May 15, 2023. The bill also ratified the new tribal-state gaming compact entered into between the State of California and the Middletown Rancheria of Pomo Indians of California, executed on March 30, 2023.

AB 498 (Aguiar-Curry, Chapter 9, Statutes of 2023) ratified the tribal-state gaming compact between the state of California and the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, executed on March 9, 2023.

AB 854 (Ramos, Chapter 272, Statutes of 2023) ratified the tribal-state gaming compact between the State of California and the Redding Rancheria, California, executed on March 30, 2023.

AB 1658 (Santiago, Chapter 852, Statutes of 2023) ratified 22 separate amendments to extend the terms, until December 31, 2024, of the 1999 tribal-state gaming compacts between the State of California and specified tribes.