

# Amodei, Heller in fed probe

U.S. Rep. Mark Amodei and former U.S. senator Dean Heller of Nevada figure in an investigation into whether the two lawmakers improperly influenced the secretary of the interior to block a Connecticut tribal casino that would have competed with an MGM casino, the Washington Post reported on Feb. 22.

“Prosecutors have begun presenting evidence to a grand jury in Washington in their probe of whether former interior secretary Ryan Zinke lied to federal investigators, according to two individuals briefed on the matter,” the Post article said.

The Mashantucket Pequot and Mohegan tribes were cleared by the Connecticut Legislature to run a casino in East Windsor, just over the border from a Springfield, Massachusetts casino constructed by MGM Resorts International. The two clubs are separated by 13 miles. But lobbying by MGM slowed federal approval of the tribal casino to a crawl. “The proposal was the subject of intense scrutiny at Interior and the White House during President Trump’s first

months in office,” according to the Post.

Casino.org reported that MGM doubled its lobbying expenses—to \$3.8 million in 2017.

Politico previously reported that Heller and Amodei lobbied against federal approval of the Connecticut casino, and Zinke did withhold that approval (“Interior design,” RN&R, Dec. 27, 2018).

“Zinke had multiple conversations last year with Sen. Dean Heller and Rep. Mark Amodei—two Nevada Republicans whose state is a major center of employment for MGM, and who have each tried to impede the tribes’ casino plans,” Nick Juliano reported in Politico one year ago.

Politico further reported that while MGM had no difficulty getting a hearing from federal officials, U.S. Sen. Richard

Blumenthal of Connecticut complained that the tribes did: “I think the Department of Interior has been derelict in failing to give approval to the tribes’ request. We asked for a meeting, but they were unresponsive. They never even responded.” □

**Both Nevada legislators received money from MGM.**

## Vet site looking good



Construction of the new Northern Nevada Veterans Home on Kietzke Lane in Sparks is nearly complete, and administrators are expected to start moving in sometime this month. “Following that milestone, there are state licensure and federal certification steps which must take place and take a couple months,” according to the state Veterans Services Department. No date has been announced for when residents may begin moving in.

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