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By MICHAEL L. NELSON SR.

Following a day of heated lobbying on behalf of Internet Sweepstake Café owners, Senate President Tom Niehaus announced that the Ohio Senate would not consider legislation to ban or regulate the cafes during this year's lame duck session.

House bill 605, passed by the Ohio House of Representatives and supported by Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine, Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson and the operators of Ohio four Casinos would have put the cafes out of business and cost thousands of Ohioans their jobs.

Internet Sweepstakes Cafes, which allows customers to use casino themed sweepstakes games to win a predetermined number of cash prizes, are located in many communities throughout the state with 51 located in Cuyahoga County. The Senate heard from many

community leaders that the cafes are a significant source of income, especially at a time when Ohio has reduced its share of local government support.

Richmond Heights, East Cleveland, North Randall and Brookpark are just a few of the cities receiving annual licensing fees and monthly payments for each computer terminal from the cafes, which operate in their community.

A number of the owners of the cafes also testified, telling the assembled senators that they have invested their life savings and are just recouping their costs. In addition, with hundreds of supporters including employees holding signs saying “Save Our Jobs,” the Senate heard testimony from customers who countered the Attorney General’s assertion that the cafes were havens for crime by extolling the virtues of the cafes as safe, crime-free environments at which they socialize under the watchful eye of off-duty police officers and private security guards.

It is anticipated that while this issue is dead for now, it will probably resurface early in the new term, which begins in January of 2013.