

FEDERAL COURT RULES VILLAGE OF UNION SPRINGS PROHIBITED FROM INTERFERING WITH CAYUGA NATION'S GAMING FACILITY

A federal court has ruled in favor of the Cayuga Nation in its decades-long dispute with the Village of Union Springs over the Nation's operation of its Lakeside Entertainment gaming facility.

In a sweeping 50-page decision that traces the history of the United States' treaty obligations to the Nation over a 200-year period, Judge David N. Hurd of the United States District Court for the Northern District of New York ruled today that the Village of Union Springs is barred from enforcing its local anti-gaming and building code ordinances against the Nation.

The Nation began operating Lakeside Entertainment, a Class II electronic gaming facility in the Village of Union Springs, in 2004, after purchasing and renovating a former NAPA Auto Parts store in 2003. After temporarily suspending operations at the facility, the Nation reopened the facility in 2013. The Village has repeatedly cited the Nation for allegedly violating a local ordinance which prohibits "games of chance" within the Village, as well as for claimed building code violations. The Nation filed suit, initially in 2003 and again in 2014, seeking to enjoin the Village from enforcement activities.

In his decision, Judge Hurd ruled that the federal Indian Gaming Regulatory Act preempts the Village's local ordinance and that the doctrine of sovereign immunity prevents the Village from enforcing its criminal and civil laws against the Nation and its leaders.

"This is a great victory for our Nation, who were made promises more than 200 years ago and have justifiably relied on those promises. The Judge ruled in favor of the Cayuga Nation on each and every one of our legal arguments," said Clint Halftown, the Nation's federal representative. "This is yet another affirmation of our sovereignty," he added.

The Nation recently closed the facility temporarily in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. “We look forward to resuming business as soon as we determine it is safe to do so and without ongoing interference from the Village,” Halftown said.