



May 5, 2009

State fair drops Schwartzkopf as security head

By *GINGER GIBSON*
The News Journal

While a vote on sports betting is expected today, the legislation may have already created problems for one lawmaker.

The bill's sponsor, Rep. Peter Schwartzkopf, was notified Friday that he would no longer be employed as the head of security for the Delaware State Fair, a job the former state trooper has held for six years. The fair holds a majority stake in Harrington Raceway and Casino, a major opponent of Schwartzkopf's bill.

Harrington opposes the sports betting legislation because it also includes an increase in the state's share of video slot revenues, a change Harrington and the state's two other casinos have said would be detrimental to their bottom line.

Gov. Jack Markell has said he will not back down on his efforts to change the state's share of revenues and there was no sign an amicable deal for the casinos had been struck on Monday, the day before the legislation is expected to receive a vote.

"I'm not going to speculate," Schwartzkopf said of the reason he was terminated. "I think it's pretty common-sense."

The state fair owns the majority of Harrington Raceway and uses the revenues from the slots and horse racing to fund the annual event.

Schwartzkopf said he was called by state fair Board of Directors President W. LeRoy Betts on Friday and told he was no longer needed for the job. Schwartzkopf said the security job was only a 10-day gig he has done for the past six years.

Schwartzkopf said he wasn't offered a deal or encouraged to revoke his support of the sports betting legislation.

"I knew, being the sponsor on the bill, things could happen," said Schwartzkopf, who is House majority leader. "This is a proposal of the governor. Part of my job is to carry the water for the governor and it's just that simple."

Prior to being elected to the state House in 2002, Schwartzkopf was a state police trooper, during which time he regularly worked security at the fair. Schwartzkopf said that combining his years as a trooper and as head of security, he has worked for the fair for about 25 years.

"I love the fairgrounds. I love the people over there. I made a lot of friends working over there," Schwartzkopf said. "I love the fair. I will miss that."

Clarence T. Scuse Jr., vice president of the state fair's board of directors, said he wasn't part of the decision to terminate Schwartzkopf.

"Pete was there for security, he ran our security for I don't know how many years now," Scuse said.
"Pete was also working for the new casinos and everything, but other than that, I have no comment."

Markell's chief of staff, Tom McGonigle, had little comment on the termination of Schwartzkopf.

"The timing is interesting given the majority leader's support for our bill," McGonigle said.

Betts and Bill DiMondi, general manager of the state fair, could not be reached for comment Monday afternoon. House Speaker Bob Gilligan, D-Sherwood Park, said he had no comment on the fair board's decision.
