

Opponents of off-reservation casino measure far outspent supporters

By Patrick McGreevy

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Elaine Bethel Fink, center, chairwoman of the North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians, stands with tribe secretary Katrina Lewis, left, and treasurer Maryann McGovran in a field near Madera where they had supported construction of a casino. (Eric Paul Zamora / Fresno Bee Staff Photo)

Opponents of Prop. 48 far outspent supporters of the Indian casino compact

Rival Native American casino interests spent \$18 million last year to defeat Proposition 48, which would have given permission for two other tribes to build a new casino near Madera, just north of Fresno, according to records filed by the campaigns.

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A separate committee that supported the ballot measure spent \$631,000, much of it from the North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians, which planned to build the new casino near Madera, and the Las Vegas giant Station Casinos Inc., a partner in the project.

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The measure was rejected by 61% of voters in the November election.

The campaign that defeated the measure on the November ballot was largely funded by the Table Mountain Rancheria, a Native American group that operates a casino 25 miles east of Madera, and Brigade Capital Management, a New York hedge fund invested in the Chukchansi Gold Resort & Casino in nearby Coarsegold, Calif.

Those interests spent \$15.7 million on a campaign that argued that allowing an off-reservation casino would set the stage for more Indian casinos closer to neighborhoods in cities in California.

Another group, including the Pechanga Band of Luiseno Indians, formed a second committee that spent \$2.3 million to oppose the ballot measure.

The measure would have given voter approval to a compact approved by the Legislature and governor granting the right to operate a casino with 2,000 slot machines to the North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians and Northern California's Wiyot Tribe.