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Panel to study casino impact on racing

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As the move to expand gambling in Maryland gathers momentum, Gov. William Donald Schaefer yesterday announced the members of a commission he has asked to study the state's beleaguered horse racing industry and the impact casinos could have on it.

The 19-member Commission on Competitive Forces Facing Maryland's Horse Racing Industry will examine the state of Maryland racing, the impact of simulcast wagering, the establishment of racing in Virginia and the economic impact of other forms of gaming now conducted or proposed for the state.

"There are a number of ongoing developments -- both inside and outside of Maryland -- that could significantly impact the industry," Schaefer said in a written statement.

The governor has said that he does not favor an expansion of gambling in the state, but is concerned about Maryland's being left out as neighboring states consider legalizing casinos and other gaming operations.

Secretary of State Tyras S. Athey will chair the commission, which is scheduled to issue recommendations by Dec. 15 and a final report June 30.

Among the members of the commission are: Maryland Racing Commission chairman John P. McDaniel and commissioner Allan C. Levey, Secretary of Economic and Employment Development Mark Wasserman, benefits consultant Sigmund A. Hyman, Baltimore County state Sen. Vernon F. Boozer, Montgomery County Del. Sheila E. Hixson, University of Maryland at College Park President William E. Kirwan, and Agriculture Secretary Lewis R. Riley.

Also serving: John X. Lucente, president of Robin Hood Homes, Robert A. Pascal, the governor's appointment secretary, Barry F. Scher, public affairs director of Giant Food, former state Del. John M. Ashley Jr., and Ronald D. Kirstien, chairman of DavCo Restaurants. Four members have yet to be named.

Baltimore Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke has appointed a similar commission, headed by Harry Cole, a former judge on the Maryland Court of Appeals. The city commission is to issue its report by January.