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Supreme Court delays slots trial until justices rule on appeal

The Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. - The Florida Supreme Court on Tuesday delayed trial court action on the validity of a state constitutional amendment that allows slot machines in Broward and Miami-Dade counties until the justices consider an appeal in the case.

The high court granted the delay sought by Floridians for a Level Playing Field, which collected petition signatures to get the issue on the ballot.

Voters approved the measure in 2004, but it was challenged by three groups that alleged the sponsors submitted thousands of forged signatures.

A trial judge initially rejected the challenge, ruling voter approval cured any problems with the signature-gathering. The 1st District Court of appeal reversed that decision and ruled the amendment must be invalidated if it can be proven the group failed to collect enough valid signatures.

The appellate judges returned the case to Circuit Court in Tallahassee for a trial to decide the signature issue but also asked the Supreme Court to rule on two related questions of great public importance. Floridians for a Level Playing Field also appealed the 1st District's ruling to the high court.

The amendment allows slots at horse and dog tracks and jai alai frontons in the two South Florida counties if approved by local referendum. Broward voters did so and slots have gone into use there, but Miami-Dade voters rejected them.

The groups challenging the amendment are Floridians Against Expanded Gambling, the Humane Society of the United States and GREY2K USA, a greyhound protection organization.

This story can be found on Jacksonville.com at <http://www.jacksonville.com/tu-apnews/stories/012307/D8MRAJ800.shtml>.
