The Chitimacha Indians in coastal
Charen至此 conduct high-stakes bingo
The Tunica Biloxi tribe in central
Louisiana’s town of Marks plans to
build a 1,000-seat bingo hall.

Although a new federal law also
opens chances for casino gambling
either on or off the reservations, tribal
leaders say they don’t plan to expand
beyond bingo.

By BILL McMAHON
Capitol news bureau

Louisiana officials are watching
closely gambling activities conducted
by Indian tribes in the state to assure
that organized crime does not become
involved.

Officials see a danger because of
the big money in gambling enterprises.

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The Chitimacha reservation.
Rep. Raymond laborde, D-
Marksville, whose legislative district
includes the 130 acres of Tunica Biloxi
land, said point blank: “There’s no
organized crime. They’re running
a good operation.”

Nonetheless, the state is sensitive to
the possibility of organized crime
infiltration. But Bella said he’s not
sure the state is properly prepared to
deal with potential Indian problems.

In August, Gov. Buddy Roemer
created by executive order the
Louisiana Indian Gaming Commission
and charged it with monitoring Indian
The executive order cites
passage by Congress last October of
the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act.

The order notes that the federal law
“provides a statutory basis for the
regulation of gaming by Indian tribes
in the state. Casino gambling is open to
them, some think, because the state
allows cruise ships with casinos to
operate out of Louisiana ports, said
Kirkpatrick, the governor’s lawyer.

She and Bissot said the Chitimachas
have discussed operating video bingo
games — bingo played with electronic
gaming devices — which would move
their gambling enterprise into the Class
3 category.

Kirkpatrick said video bingo
compiles with regular bingo for
players. She said her understanding is
that for video bingo to be successful,
it has to be collateral entertainment to
a bar or a restaurant.

Bissot said if the Indians begin using
video bingo machines, a natural
extension would be to video poker
machines, which are more like slot
machines.

Bella said he believes the Louisiana
Indians are being cautious about the
further development of gambling on
their lands.

“They all say they want to conform to
the laws of the state,” Bella said.
“They’re aware there are people out
organized crime will dominate
Indian reservations within
10 years.”

He said Mafia infiltration of
reservations is widespread, that of
Indian gaming operations nationwide,
are run by organized crime families.

Fifty percent of the operations have
some tie to organized crime, he said.

“Anytime there’s easy money, the
mob will move in,” the former Mafia
figure told the Senate Select Committee
on Indian Affairs.

“I don’t see organized crime moving
in, or (there being) outside criminal
activity,” said state Rep. V.J. Bella, R-
Berwick, whose hometown is near the
Chitimacha reservation.