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# Group wants Indiana to legalize video gaming machines

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INDIANAPOLIS - A lobbying group for bars, taverns and fraternal clubs wants to add electronic gambling machines to the dart boards, billiards tables and other games already in many of those businesses.

The Indiana Licensed Beverage Association is trying to change state law to legalize video gaming machines now illegal in those establishments.

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Contending they already are in widespread use but hidden from authorities, the association wants to bring the devices out from the shadows.

Legalize, regulate and tax them, the association says, and Indiana could make a bundle in revenue from the money gamblers deposit in the machines.

The association contends it could mean \$200 million for the state with an additional \$100 million for local governments.

The group will bring its presentation to Evansville on Tuesday - the latest stop in a series of statewide

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meetings - to try to drum up public support among clubs  
and taverns for a change in state law.

The presentation will be at 2 p.m. at the Eagles No. 427,  
at 6000 Old Boonville Highway.

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Another presentation is scheduled at 7 p.m. at the Moose Lodge, 830 Jefferson St. in Tell City, Ind.

Beverage association executive director Brad Klopfenstein estimated that 20,000 to 35,000  
gambling machines already operate illegally in Indiana, and high-profile police raids succeed only in  
driving them elsewhere.



"It's one of these things where the state can try to take them out of bars; but all that does is send  
them into convenience stores, truck stops and bait shops, and that doesn't fix the problem,"  
Klopfenstein said.

Moreover, similar devices already are legal on riverboat casinos, he said.

Rather than the old Cherry Master devices, the beverage association proposes legalizing modern  
slot-like machines that offer video poker and a variety of other games. Similar to online lottery  
terminals, the devices could be

linked electronically to the state so that revenue and payouts to players are tracked daily.

If the devices were legalized for establishments with alcohol permits, such as bars and fraternal  
lodges, Klopfenstein suggested they would keep 70 percent of the net proceeds with 30 percent of  
the net going to state and local governments.

Each machine can generate \$500 to \$1,000 in revenue a week, he said.

Although Klopfenstein said the beverage association has at least one legislator willing to introduce a  
legalization bill in the 2007 session, two veteran legislators - one a Republican and the other a  
Democrat - said legalizing gambling in bars is unlikely to be approved in the 2007 General  
Assembly.

The state's economy has recovered enough that the Legislature isn't as dependent on funding state  
government through gambling revenue, they said.

State Rep. Dennis Avery, D-Evansville, said he would not support legalizing additional forms of  
gambling. He had concerns that electronic gambling in bars would be addictive.

"People after work would drop by the bar and sometimes lose their paycheck for the week," Avery  
said. "I hate to hear of things like that. They do happen."

Indiana already has legalized the lottery, dockside gambling at 10 riverboat casinos (with an 11th to open soon), two parimutuel horse-racing tracks with off-track betting parlors, church bingo and paper pull-tabs in fraternal clubs. Some legislators believe gambling has gone far enough in Indiana.

"I think among a lot of members, that is the feeling: There is enough gaming, and we shouldn't expand it any further," said state Sen. Vaneta Becker, R-Evansville. "I would look for feedback from my constituents before making a decision, but that's my first inclination."

Becker believes gambling-machine legislation is less likely to pass in the Indiana House if Republicans retain their control after the Nov. 7 election than if Democrats regain House control - but even then, she thought it unlikely to pass.

Avery said that every session of the Legislature, gambling interests advocate for expanding gaming.

"They always come up with very high estimates for its expected revenue stream," Avery said.

Asked whether he would sign a bill to legalize gaming machines, Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels said Friday he was open to the idea.

"I've said before the answer is 'maybe,' if it was tightly regulated," said Daniels, a Republican.

But if laws banning the machines are on the books, they ought to be enforced, he said.

"If the Legislature wants to modify those laws, I'd sure look at it," Daniels said. "I think any such proposal would be tightly regulated, limited, and probably have the effect of reducing the total amount of Cherry Master gambling that went on in the state while assuring people that it was being done honestly."

One fraternal lodge in Vanderburgh County, the Eagles No. 427 club, once had four Cherry Master machines - and used the revenue for charity but voluntarily got rid of them about 10 years ago, said Bob Steele, club secretary.

That happened after police raided other establishments in Evansville and seized similar devices, Steele recalled.

"We didn't want to take a chance on getting raided, too, so we just took them out," he said.

Before the Eagles would consider installing gambling machines again, the club would want to know what percentage the state would get, he said.

Video gambling devices made headlines last week when police closed down more than 20 bars and businesses near Anderson, Ind., and arrested an ex-Teamsters leader, John Neal, on charges of promoting professional gambling.

Nearly 30 other people accused of working for Neal's alleged illegal-gambling operation were also arrested. Indiana Excise Police seized the alcohol permits for 23 bars involved in the raids, according to published reports.

"I've pointed to him as the prime example of why we need to legalize and regulate these things," Klopfenstein said of Neal. "We don't want to be a seedy, underground, back-room sort of thing."

But the Anderson raid hurts the beverage association's case, Avery believes.

"It gives another blemish to what people already suspect, that gambling has ties to less savory members of the community," he said.

#### Your Turn

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**Posted by b.michel on September 24, 2006 at 6:07 a.m. (Suggest removal)**

YES LEGALIZE THEM.USE THE MONEY TO LOWER ARE TAXES!

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**Posted by hitec24 on September 24, 2006 at 6:37 a.m. (Suggest removal)**

Stupid, dumb, damn Democrats! Dennis Avery: You just called me a "less savory member of the community!" You don't even know me! I love to play those machines. I don't have a criminal record, I don't use drugs, I don't sell drugs. I abide by the law. I live a good life. But yet I'm "less savory." I'd "gamble" to say YOU have done more things that are illegal or unethical your lifetime than I have!

By the way, you also called my parents and some of my friends "less savory" and that, I really resent! My parents are two of the most upstanding members of their community that I know. And I know it's rude but; SHUT THE HELL UP!

If someone is going to lose their paycheck on gambling, it's going to happen whether it's leagal or not!  
Wake up!

Just once I would like to see a Rep. or Senator, State or National, quit talking about how the general public should spend their money. Don't you dare assume to be my "protector" or "guide", if you will. You all sit up in Indy & Washington D.C. and vote yourselves a payraise EVERY SINGLE YEAR!!! That to me, is an abuse of power. But, "we the people" are powerless to stop it. Don't tell me were not powerless and we can vote new people in. BULLS@#T!! The new people end up just the same. "Oh! More money for me...why sure I'll vote yes!" DUH!

You know...it's always seems like the government worries too much about itself and not the people it serves. Quit worrying about this petty stuff. Yes IT IS petty in the big picture. Why don't you spend your time & our money more productively and tackle a serious problem like METH and the other drugs, or add more officers on our Police Depts., give more money to some of the smaller communities for their Fire Depts.

Leagalize the machines and put the revenue to good use. Here's one idea: Lower the property taxes on automobiles and let us all pay one rate no matter what we drive, like Illinois. And they get two(2) license plates for that price.

Yes to all you faithful readers of our beloved newspaper, I know Dennis Avery probably will not read this. But I feel better.

VOTE REPUBLICAN!

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**Posted by 81VETT on September 24, 2006 at 8:35 a.m. (Suggest removal)**

Lets turn the city into "Little Las Vegas", look at the money we will raise in taxes.

Let's throw in prostitution, now there's a money maker!

Let's franchise opium dens, we could call them DENS-R-US, just look what opium dens have done for the world. We could corner the US market!

Go for it, we need the tax revenue!

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Posted by topgun1926 on September 25, 2006 at 7:47 a.m. (Suggest removal)

Where is all the supposed to be christain,s in this country ,Every body wants gambling ,prostitutes ,and women running around necked . This nation almost belongs to the devil

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Username: **bklopfenstein** (Log out)

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