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HOUSING GUIDE

# Advocates push for bill to legalize video gambling

DINING SCENE

**Supporters say legislation would improve economy**

HEALTH DIRECTORY

By **Roy Maurer** | Indiana Daily Student | Monday, September 04, 2006

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Efforts to galvanize support for the legalization of video gambling machines in bars and social clubs will be in full swing throughout the month of September, Brad Klopfenstein, the executive director of the Indiana Licensed Beverage Association, said in a press release.

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The ILBA is making the first step in a lobby push by scheduling meetings to be held in American Legion Halls and Veterans of Foreign Wars Posts across the state.

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"We believe that in order to pass legislation, there must be a strong coalition," Klopfenstein said. "These meetings are to organize a unified message to be sent to the General Assembly that this will be a positive fiscal impact on every community in Indiana."

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ILBA's proposed legalization of the machines, technically referred to as electronic gaming devices, could provide the state of Indiana a \$300 million shot in the arm generated from tax revenue while at the same time regulating the access and operation of machines that already exist illegally all over the state.

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The \$300 million estimate is based on a 2003 study conducted by ILBA and economist David Reed. The study demonstrated that the revenue could be reached with 35,000 gaming machines and a 30 percent tax rate.

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Current estimates as to how many illegal machines are being operated vary from 10,000 to 30,000.

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It's the existence of the illegal machines and the lost revenue from them that has some lawmakers scratching their heads.

This is the crux of the issue for state Sen. Vi Simpson, D-Ellettsville, who is interested in seeing the details of any proposed legislation.

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"This is a foolish situation as it exists right now, where law enforcement does not enforce the current law (allowing illegal machines). There's no regulation as to age restriction and location, and no taxes are being collected," Simpson said. "Anyone who says this would be an expansion of gaming just isn't aware of what's already taking place across the state."

Gov. Mitch Daniels is also on record stating that the machines should either be legalized and taxed, or laws against them should be enforced.

This would not be the first time legalization efforts were put before the House, where revenue-raising bills generally start. This type of bill, which has been introduced several times in the last few years, has only made it to a committee once, where it was never heard.

Long-standing advocate for legalization Rep. Winn Moses, D-Fort Wayne, is projected to be the go-to man once enough support is drummed up by ILBA.

"Moses will more than likely file that bill for us this year," Klopfenstein said. "It's then that the coalition we're building will need to jump into action."

Key points of a proposed bill would be allowing holders of permits for on-premise consumption of alcoholic beverages to operate electronic gaming devices, the use of the state's gaming commission to monitor compliance and enforcement of gaming laws and regulations, establishing a maximum number of devices that may be operated by a license holder, prohibiting play by minors and requiring that devices be out of the sight of minors.



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