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## Bar Owners Push to Legalize Video Gambling

11/29/2005

By Eric Berman and Cheryl Miller



Indiana bar owners are trying to mobilize a grassroots campaign to lobby the Indiana legislature to legalize video gambling machines.

The Indiana Licensed Beverage Association is holding 10 meetings around the state, building a database of bar owners and social-club patrons willing to contact legislators.

President Don Marquardt argues legalizing the machines already in many bars would let the state regulate payouts, restrict access to adults only, and reduce the number of machines.

He says the taxes on the machines could raise millions of dollars for state coffers.

"We all know what kind of money these machines raise, but the legislators say it's hard to sell it on the money aspect," he says.

So, Marquardt says he's been advised to downplay the monetary aspect when lobbying lawmakers to consider the bill.

House Public Policy Chairman Marlin Stutzman has said he doubts he'll hear the bill, and House Speaker Brian Bosma has been critical of the legislation.

But Brad Klopfenstein, beverage association executive director, says a questionnaire that House Republicans sent to their constituents this year may indicate some legislators are open to legalization.

"The number four question is, 'Would you support legalizing video gambling machines... located at restaurants and bars if they were taxed and regulated by the state?' That's a first as far as I've ever seen," he says.

So, the beverage association is asking bar owners to commit to calling their legislators and asking them to support legalization of video gambling. They also want to team up with veterans groups and social clubs with gambling machines in an effort to mobilize those groups.

Marquardt is hopeful that the pressure to reduce property taxes will make Republicans reconsider video gambling.

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