LANSING, Mich.

A man who owns 10 Flint-area bars has been charged with operating illegal casinos as part of a statewide crackdown.

Michigan Attorney General Mike Cox said in a statement that Craig Hatch was arraigned Wednesday on 10 counts of operating a casino without a

license. Each offense carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a $100,000 fine.

Authorities say bars owned by Hatch operated illegal poker-machines from March 2006 to November 2007, allowing patrons to gamble as if they were in a licensed casino. They said Hatch paid cash winnings to patrons while taking measures to evade detection by law enforcement.

Cox said 35 defendants have been charged for their roles in the operation.

A message seeking comment was left Friday by The Associated Press at a phone listing in Hatch's name.

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