

Written by Administrator  
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Come Monday morning, Pennsylvania becomes the fourth state in America to move into the world of [legal, online casino gambling](#).

That's when the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board will launch the first public test runs of betting applications that will permit registered players, age 21 and over, to play slots and other casino-style games from computers, laptops and some smart phones and tablets.

Online poker is running a little behind, but should be added to the menu of games later this summer.

[Penn National's Hollywood Casino](#) and [Parx Casino in Bensalem, Bucks County](#) have already set their roll-outs for 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., respectively.

In addition, Philadelphia's SugarHouse Casino will be launching its test runs on Wednesday.

Several other igaming providers will come on board later in the summer, PGCB Executive Director Kevin O'Toole said, in order to launch both casino games and online sports betting in tandem with the start of the 2019 football season.

"They feel that there's a synergy in doing them at or about the same time," O'Toole said.

Here's some things to know about Pennsylvania's most-extensive step yet into gambling everywhere, all-the-time.

**What's the attraction to betting online?**

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For the customer, it's a variety of things, ranging from convenience to, for younger players, gambling on a platform that is a little closer to the game-playing experience they may have grown up with.

The industry says that most online gaming play is either reaching new audiences that don't regularly visit casinos, or it's extra play by those who do.

"It doesn't replace casino gambling," noted Michael Soll, president of gaming industry consulting firm The Innovation Group. He says studies show that cannibalization of what would have been bets placed at the casino, at least so far, is in the low single digits.

As opposed to the social activity of a night out at the casino, "this fills a different space in someone's life," said Soll. "It occupies that place we put ourselves into when we're passing time, or moving into our evening activities, sort of tuning out the day and doing something more recreational."

For the casinos, he added, it is not only an amenity they feel they need to offer because their competitors are already there, "it is a window into new players, and it is a window into their existing players off the casino floor."

### **Will this be another big moneymaker for the state?**

It will have some marginal effect on the state budget, but the amount of money raised probably won't touch that generated by slots or table games at the physical casinos.

We took a look at the most recent revenue reports from New Jersey, which has been at this gaming business for several years now.

In May, the casino floors at Atlantic City still accounted for 82.6 percent of all commercial gaming revenue in the Garden State. Internet-based games carved out 14.4 percent of the total

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win. The remaining 3.0 percent was from in-person and online sports betting.

The bigger impact is likely to just be the pervasiveness of online casinos that are available to everyone in cyberspace 24/7/365.

### **Are there controls on who can play?**

Yes. The industry and regulators have worked hard on identity verification and geo-location tools that are designed to ensure that everyone playing is aged 21 or older, and betting within the Pennsylvania lines.

Players have to pre-register with the casinos' online platforms, which are accessible from their company Websites, and set up accounts from which bets can be played and winnings deposited.

Part of the pre-testing that's already been done is to make sure that those systems are up and running, and working well.

### **What about gambling addiction?**

That's a big bet that state lawmakers and Gov. Tom Wolf are making.

Soll, of The Innovation Group, there may be some cases of gambling addiction because of the increased accessibility, but there is no evidence to date to suggest that the incidence rate of problem gambling has increased.

As with other forms of gambling including the lottery, it is a buyer beware situation because there are no independent monitors or controls that prevent you from betting your mortgage

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money. It is literally up to the gambler to follow the old adage: "Bet with your head, and not over it."

The new online systems do allow for players to voluntarily set limits on their own accounts that will send them a flag if they have bet past a certain limit, or been playing for longer than a pre-set time. But those limits are better controlled, and can be overridden.

There is also a cyber-version of the voluntary self-exclusion list [accessible from the Gaming Control Board's site that people can put themselves on to literally ban them from playing at any on-line site](#) for one year, five years, or life. That's an unbreakable ban.

But again, it requires the player to take the first step.

### **What devices can one play from?**

The games in Pennsylvania should be immediately accessible on any desktop or laptop computers, and then on mobile devices like tablets and smartphones on the Android operating system.

The Pennsylvania casinos' platforms, for the moment, will not be accessible via iPhones or iPads because of recent changes in Apple's rules for granting App developers' clearance to get their applications listed in its App Store.

For the time being, that cuts out about half of the smart phone market, which is not ideal. But the gaming companies say they are optimistic that they will soon reach an agreement with Apple that will give them full access to iPhones and other Apple devices.

Smart phones operating on the Android operating system, meanwhile, also run into a prohibition on gambling apps in its Google Play store. But Penn National and the other companies say

users will be able to download an Android-compatible app direct from their Websites.

## **Who runs the games?**

This was part of the massive gambling expansion proposed by the Republican-controlled General Assembly and agreed to by Democrat Wolf as part of [a tax-avoiding, budget-balancing agreement in 2017](#).

The online games in Pennsylvania were [first offered to the casino companies that are already operating physical facilities here](#). Those interested have acquired interactive gaming licenses, and - in tandem with their on-line partners - are rolling out their product as they are ready.

Because a few of the 39 available certificates were not acquired, the state opened the market to non-Pennsylvania operators and received new applications from MGM and Golden Nugget. Both of their license applications remain under review with the state.

## **When will the other casinos follow?**

That is expected to happen through the course of the summer.

As noted above, Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board Executive Director Kevin O'Toole said that he expects a number of other casino companies to roll out their online casino games and sports books together just before the start of the 2019 college and pro football seasons.

## **What's the test period all about?**

Think of a "soft opening" of a restaurant or bar.

## Internet-based casino games are set to start in Pennsylvania July 15; what's that mean for players, taxpayers

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Bettors can set up accounts and play games for real money, but the online platforms will only be open for several hours each day as opposed to round the clock.

On Monday, for example, Hollywood will be open from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.; and Parx will run from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m., gaming board spokesman Doug Harbach said. Tuesday, Hollywood will go from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Parx will run from 2 p.m. to midnight.

Hollywood, which hasn't opened its online sportsbook yet, will also run a third day of tests on Wednesday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (Parx went live with online sports in late June.)

The tests provide an opportunity, O'Toole said, for the casinos and the gaming control board to make sure all gaming, security and accounting systems are working properly.

"We just want to make sure that the rules, our regulations and the casinos' internal controls are complied with because this is the first time that certain employees will be engaging in that kind of activity," O'Toole said last week.

Assuming everything goes according to Hoyle, the casinos will be in round-the-clock operation by the latter half of the week.

**Read more** <https://www.pennlive.com/entertainment/2019/07/internet-based-casino-games-are-set-to-start-in-pennsylvania-july-15-whats-that-mean-for-players-taxpayers.html>