

MGM casino eager for sports betting law

Written by Administrator

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“The Legislature has been studying it. As you know, your Legislature is pretty deliberate. It took us a while to get the casino industry in here, so sports betting is the next one to go,” Mathis said. He added, “It’s just a matter of getting it on the priority list. And there’s a lot of important things the state is tackling. So we’ve been patient, but really what we’ve got to watch out for is these surrounding states are really getting aggressive.”

The Supreme Court last year granted states permission to legalize an activity that had previously been mostly sequestered to Nevada and illegal operations. Beacon Hill legislative leaders then expressed interest in tackling sports betting early in this session. But as other states raced forward, the Committee on Economic Development and Emerging Technologies began to dig into the issues that would come with the implementation of sports betting, and the issue was moved to the back burner at the State House.

Lawmakers previously suggested they could address the expanding scope of the gaming universe — including sports betting, daily fantasy sports, and other forms of gaming and wagering — in the spring of 2020. Sports betting is already legal in Rhode Island, and New Hampshire has authorized it to begin in the coming weeks.

“It’s very much an active part of the committee’s focus and the committee’s conversations. It’s very much an active debate and discussion in the committee and it’s something that we’re continuing to study and prepare,” said Senator Eric Lesser, Senate chair of the Economic Development Committee.

Governor Charlie Baker filed his betting bill in January with the hope that it would pass in time for the start of the NFL season in September. The Economic Development Committee held two days of hearings in May and the governor’s bill remains in that committee, as do other similar proposals.

Lesser said his assumption is that “if something is proposed, it will take some of the best elements of each idea.” He said the rough outline of what any bill would need to address is pretty consistent: “There would need to be a strong ability to close the black market and bring the practice into the sunlight and regulate it, and ensure very robust consumer protections and ensure it is properly taxed.”

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The governor's bill, which would allow the state's casinos and online-only operators like DraftKings or FanDuel to take bets on professional games, projects that the state would collect an estimated \$35 million in new revenue from sports betting, roughly equal to the amount of revenue the state expects to take in from having recently applied the lodging tax to short-term rental properties.

Lesser said it is important for legislators to think through the consequences of legalizing sports betting before the committee decides whether to propose a legalization bill.

"It is an issue that has potentially broad social consequences, so it has to be done deliberately and properly," he said. "So that's the approach we're taking."

During an appearance on WEEI in October, Baker said the Legislature understands that other states can capture revenue from Massachusetts bettors and expects that the Legislature will "get around to it" — but not until the end of the legislative session in July.

"Our expectation is that this is something that the Legislature will take up before the end of the session, okay," Baker said. "The session ends in July, but I would be very surprised if it got done before that."

Mathis said he understands that the Legislature will be busy with other priorities, "but this one just seems like a no-brainer."

"It's a matter of when it happens, not if," he said. "But I do think we've got to raise the urgency."

Mathis said MGM hopes a sports betting law will be in place to allow gamblers to place bets on mobile devices by this summer, and that his casino in downtown Springfield is already working to establish its own betting parlor.

"We've got space — I'm sure Encore and Plainridge have looked at it — we've got space ready

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for a physical sportsbook. But we're ready to turn it on in a matter of weeks, not months," he said. "We put infrastructure, we're spending money just because we don't want to lose ground to surrounding states once we get this thing through the Legislature."

Read more <https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2019/12/27/mgm-casino-eager-for-sports-betting-law/uTrGJdlwjrKWR5CsI78fXM/story.html>