



WEEK 4

FRIDAY 24 JAN 2014

THIS WEEK

- Leading ISPs rebuff UK Gambling Commission
- Column: Simon Jones on bingo customer support
- IOC sign MoU with Nevada gaming board
- Tweets of the week



TOP STORY

NEW JERSEY IN FOREIGN GAMING PUSH

Bill would permit operators to serve overseas customers



New Jersey senator Raymond Lesniak

New Jersey senator Raymond Lesniak has reintroduced amended legislation which allow a specially licensed operators to offer online gaming to players outside the US.

Bill S692, which has been referred to the Senate State Government, Wagering, Tourism & Historic Preservation Committee, would authorise "the licensing of operators to provide restricted foreign internet wagering to foreign patrons under certain circumstances" via the creation of a New Jersey restricted foreign internet wagering licence.

The legislation would permit the provision of online casino games and slots, as well as any other game that state regulators the Division of Gaming Enforcement (DGE) "determine by regulation" to be suitable for internet wagering, which looks set to include poker.

Not included in the amended Bill however is sports betting. In a notable change from Senator Lesniak's initial Bill (S3084), which was introduced last month, the authorisation for "sporting events taking place outside of the United States" has been removed.

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Bill S692 requires all equipment used by a licensee to be located within Atlantic City [pictured], while a gross revenue tax of 15% would be imposed alongside either an investment of 2.5% in state development projects or an investment alternative tax of 5%.



Licensees will however be entitled to claim a credit against any foreign internet wagering tax imposed by the state, equal to any tax paid on the same income abroad.

Foreign internet wagering permits costing at least \$200,000 would be valid for one year at a time, with a renewal fee costing at least \$100,000. An annual fee of \$100,000 to be allocated to programmes to prevent compulsive gambling and to assist compulsive gamblers would also be payable.

When announcing plans for the original Bill at a press conference in November, Lesniak said the legislation would “put New Jersey at the hub” of the international gaming industry, describing companies located in existing offshore jurisdictions as lacking “the stability, the stamp of

approval, that gives a lot of credibility to their product.”

KEY POINTS

- New Jersey senator introduces foreign online gaming legislation.
- Raymond Lesniak’s amended Bill would allow specially-licensed operators to serve overseas players.
- Sports betting removed from original Bill.

UK ONLINE GAMING

ISPs RESIST WEBSITE WARNINGS Gambling Commission wanted illegal sites highlighted

The UK Gambling Commission have failed in an attempt to attach warnings to unlicensed gambling websites. The *Financial Times* report that the regulatory body recently met with internet service providers (ISPs) in the hope of having warning pages, also known as ‘splash pages’, placed on the sites to alert users to their illegality.

The firms have refused to comply however, with a TalkTalk spokeswoman declaring that the company do not believe ISPs should dictate a customer’s content access, adding that a “proper legal framework” is important when it comes to blocking. A BT statement said that blocking requests should be made in conjunction with a court order.

The issue is particularly pertinent ahead of the likely introduction of place-of-consumption legislation in December which would require all operators serving UK customers to hold a UK licence.

The Gambling Commission said: “At this stage we are just exploring back-up options as we do not expect illegal sites to be a major issue given the

attractiveness and width of the legal offer.”

KEY POINTS

- ISPs rebuff Gambling Commission attempts to have warnings attached to unlicensed gaming websites.
- Internet firms insist court order or legislation is required.

BETTING INTEGRITY

NEVADA SIGNS MoU WITH IOC

Collaboration to protect sporting integrity

The Nevada State Gaming Control Board have agreed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) designed to maintain the integrity of sport. The cooperation between the regulatory body and the sports federation, which will include the exchange of sports-betting information, begins with next month’s Winter Olympics in Sochi.



Nevada State Gaming Control Board website

The wagering information will be utilised by the IOC’s newly established Integrity Betting Intelligence System (IBIS) – in use for the first time in

Tweets of the week 

“Vegas bookies worried about Super Bowl weather. A snowstorm could spook casual bettors.”
AP gambling reporter Hannah Dreier [[@hannahdreier](#)]

“Facebook will lose 80% of users by 2017, say Princeton researchers.”
The Guardian [[@guardian](#)]

“DOJ says it completed its audit of Full Tilt Poker player remission petitions. Approved release of \$82m in funds to approx 30k players.”
Rich Muny, Poker Players Alliance [[@RichMuny](#)]

Sochi – which collates and distributes intelligence on betting-related manipulation of sport.

KEY POINTS

- Nevada regulators agree information-sharing MoU with the International Olympic Committee.

GUEST COLUMNIST

“BINGO FIRMS NEED TO FOCUS ON TALKING TO THEIR PLAYERS”



by **Simon Jones**
commercial
director

“I might be new to the world of online gambling and more so online bingo,

but I’m no stranger to marketing. Having recently taken a new role with the company responsible for WhichBingo.co.uk and FreeBingo.co.uk, I wanted to know more about bingo brands and how they interacted and marketed themselves to bingo players. So I set about researching the quality of customer support in online bingo and what I found surprised and even shocked me.

Looking at the industry as a whole, online gambling has its fair share of naysayers. Bingo has grown in popularity over the last five years or so and it would appear to have its problems when it comes to customer support. There’s also the issue of saturation. I mean – come on – how many bingo TV adverts can one person take in over the course of a day or a week?

My partner recently spent a day in front of the sofa watching daytime TV as a result of a bout of cold/flu (not

‘man flu’ of course; that’s much worse and she would have been in bed, not lounging around watching *Jeremy Kyle*). She understands what I do for a living, but like so many other millions of Britons she didn’t ‘get’ the whole bingo thing, until that day in front of the TV.

She was genuinely shocked at the amount of advertising there was for bingo brands. In fact, she said that every other ad was for a bingo company she’d never heard of. And what was the deal with all this free money? Deposit X and play with Y? “Surely that’s just a marketing ploy to get you to part with your money?” she asked. Of course it is, darling, that’s how the industry makes its money. “But hold on, what’s this wagering thing all about?”, she asked. Ah, well, that’s one of the problems players have, you see...

Wagering. It’s almost a taboo topic of conversation for some bingo brands when it comes to dealing with disgruntled players. There are over 360 online bingo websites out there for players in the UK and only one or two that have simple wagering requirements on depositing and bonus money. I won’t go into details of who they are but you wouldn’t be surprised. But what did surprise me was how some of the bigger, more well-known bingo brands interact with their players. Or don’t, as is more often the case.

Back to some research. I looked into the quality of customer support for online bingo via five main support channels: telephone, live help, email, Twitter and Facebook.

My research highlighted some interesting statistics and some worrying patterns, particularly the lack of attention given to social

media channels. Not surprisingly, telephone and email were the strongest customer support channels. However, social media (Twitter and Facebook) was either very poor or non-existent. And, taking Twitter for a moment, out of the 75 bingo brands I asked a support question via their Twitter account (most of them have a Twitter account) only two responded within an hour, and I didn’t get any other responses within 48 hours. Responses via Facebook were equally worrying. Fewer than 50% of brands failed to respond to a support question in 48 hours. And this is what shocked me. You might think that most current bingo players don’t use social media for customer support, but think about the next generation of players. How are they going to interact with bingo brands? As more and more focus is put on mobile and tablet platforms, the use of social media is only going to increase.

My point to all this? There are hundreds of online bingo websites out there and a barrage of TV adverts to entice players into parting with their cash. If operators can’t communicate effectively using the support channels that players want to use, they’re going to fail, and fail quicker as the next generation of player comes online.”

Simon Jones is commercial director at Focus Online Management with a background in marketing and experience in financial services, sports and leisure, and retail

Want to be a guest columnist in GI Friday? Write to: editor@gamblinginsider.com

OUT NOW: Look out for the new Jan/Feb issue of *Gambling Insider's* print magazine, including Tom Watson on FOBTs, a major focus on mergers and acquisitions in the gambling industry, and a review of New Jersey’s early days of legal online gaming





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