

Online Poker Regulation, an Urgent Call by State Representative Jim Kasper (R-Fargo): Why Not North Dakota and Why Not Now?

Of how the Department of Justice interfered in the North Dakota legislative process to kill HB1509 and HCR 3035, the two bills that would have enacted legislation in that state to license and regulate the internet poker industry –created, promoted and sponsored by State Representative Jim Kasper from North Dakota- using misinformation and misleading quotes in an intimidation letter. Will the industry rise and call this bluff?

Atlanta, GA (PRWEB) May 19, 2005 -- Many industry experts estimate there are between 40 and 50 Million Americans currently playing poker recreationally, offline. Let's stop right there for one second, sip on that... between 40 and 50 million people! The U.S. total population comprehends a little over 291 Million people; that tells you that a whooping 17% of the total population of the U.S. gathers round a table to play poker... what will happen when these people learn about the convenience and ease of playing poker online?

Poker is a pop culture phenomenon. It's on Bravo, ESPN, FOX and the Travel Channel when you lounge in front of your screen on your Lazy-Boy at the end of the day; the voice on the radio talks to you about it when you're driving to work; lifestyle magazines publish guides to playing poker online... In a society where people struggle to escape routine, they've found the rush of adrenaline that only a game of poker can give... and they're seeking for it.

In a little bit less than 3 years from today, online poker is expected to have generated a total turnover of over \$250 Billion and that mark might very well be pushed up to \$275 Billion by 2012. How much revenue will this industry generate for the U.S. government, or any state in the U.S., in form of taxes? As of right now, Zero dollars... that's right, Nada, Zilch! And why is that? Simply put, because as of today the online poker industry remains unregulated in the United States.

Why Should Online Poker Be Regulated?

As a family parent, how do you make sure that your teenage son or daughter, are not splurging the money in your credit card on an online poker game? What resources does a compulsive gambler have to avoid clicking away the funds that should be destined to ensure his family's well-being?

Think about it: do you believe that simply because online poker is currently unregulated, people will stop playing poker online? If your answer is 'yes', you might want to reconsider that.

“Based solely on our conversion rates, we have reasons to believe that over 500 new players are joining an online poker room every day and those numbers would only include the American market” says Ryan Jacobs, Chief Operational Officer of SportsCrew.com, “these are people that had never before play a poker hand online...”

Those figures are only likely to increase from this point on. At that pace, it would seem like the most sensible thing to do in the U.S would be to regulate the online poker industry. Regulation would implement effective measures against:

- Gambling in populations under 18 years of age
- Compulsive gambling
- Lack of a taxation structure

And it would also bring:

- Revenue in form of taxes
- A significant source of employment for the American economy
- More control

And that's precisely the powerful argument that N.D. State Representative Jim Kasper holds with the boldness and the courage that only a man of vision can have. He wants to bring the much needed regulation for online poker to North Dakota. He's the intellectual father and prime sponsor of bills HB1509 and HCR 3035, the bills he introduced in the North Dakota legislature this year to license and regulate Internet Poker companies that would re-locate to North Dakota. HB 1509 set forth the rules to regulate, license and tax the industry and HCR 3035 was the constitutional amendment that would have allowed the people of North Dakota to vote on amending the State Constitution to make internet poker legal. "North Dakota [has set an important state precedent by introducing legislation that will protect players of this popular card game through sound and enforced regulations, and has the potential to make significant contributions to the state economy through taxes and operational presence on U.S. soil," says Representative Kasper.

So What Did Really Happen in North Dakota? What Killed the Bills?

After an enthusiastic and warm welcome in the beginning -when the House of Representatives voted 50-44 to pass both HB 1509 and HCR 3035- the legislation moved to the state Senate for hearing on March 8, 2005. In spite of compelling testimonies from various representatives of the online poker industry -who flew from around the world to Bismarck in support of Rep. Kasper's legislation- the Senate voted to kill both bills as only three of the 47 senators voted to pass the bills. This twist of fate was caused by a letter sent to the N.D. Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem by the Department of Justice. The letter stated, among other things, that the proposed bills "could be in violation of federal laws."

Addressed to North Dakota Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem, and signed by U.S. Deputy Assistant Attorney General Laura Parsky, the letter by the Department of Justice was clearly a resource of intimidation. "That letter was full of misinformation and misleads," says Representative Kasper, "it was nothing more than an intimidation technique by the Department of Justice, which claimed that bills HB1509 and HCR 3035 COULD be deemed illegal under the Wire Act... but that failed to substantiate that argument in a legal way". And in spite of three separate legal opinions from renowned and respected attorneys from around the U.S. refuting the DOJ's letter, the North Dakota Senate could not be moved to support the bills.

(Read a copy of the letter written by the Department of Justice by clicking on the following link:

http://www.sportscrew.com/pokerpages/poker_sectionstory.php?sectionid=89)

Attorney General Stenehjem's Position

In a conversation with Rep. Jim Kasper, Attorney General Stenehjem stated that he did not initiate the phone call to the DOJ, they called him. He stated they gave him the same positions and arguments on the phone that they had given the state of Nevada and The Virgin Islands, in prior years on this subject. A.G. Stenehjem said to Rep. Kasper that he told the DOJ he was not going to relay any phone discussion to anyone and if they had concerns about what was going on in North Dakota, they should put their concerns in writing. That is what generated the DOJ letter. He then was asked by the press if there had been any correspondence with the DOJ and his office and that is when he had to release the letter. He said he would not have done so, unless he had been asked.

Rep. Kasper approached AG Stenehjem and asked him which –in his opinion- were the venues to be followed to implement the law, if the Senate had passed HB1509 and HCR 3035 and if the people of North Dakota would approve the Constitutional Amendment in June of 2006. “I would move to Federal Court to resolve the issue on the position the DOJ has taken regarding the legality of the Licensing and Regulation of Internet Poker in North Dakota once and for all” said AG Stenehjem to Rep. Kasper, “this is the step that any state will have to take, if and when a state passes a law like the ones we had in HB 1509 and HCR 3035”. A.G. Stenehjem further stated he is not fearful or against taking this step, he simply believes this is the proper step to take.

Representative Jim Kasper firmly believes he wouldn't do anything to scuttle the rules and regulations, if the people of North Dakota approve the Constitutional Amendment. “Once the people speak, by approving the Constitutional Amendment, we as elected officials are bound to implement their wishes” said Rep. Kasper.

North Dakota, A Unique Opportunity

It is the firm conviction of Rep. Kasper that the online poker industry has the opportunity –right now- to win this issue by the vote of the people in North Dakota, simply by supporting an initiated measure in North Dakota. Under this approach, about 26,000 signatures of N.D. voters would be required to bring the question to the 2006 ballot in North Dakota. An initiated measure would allow a change in the North Dakota Constitution, in order to finally license, regulate and tax the online poker industry in that state. If the industry gives up on the process in North Dakota, it would have to start from scratch in some other state - if it ever wishes to have access to the US market in a regulated environment. Where would this industry find a Legislator who knows these issues better than State Representative Jim Kasper? Who'd be willing to engage in the battle in some other state?

Rep. Kasper is raising his voice out loud, he's willing to put up the fight and persist in his purpose, even in the face of the current obstacles. But he also believes it's crucial for the online poker industry to step to the plate and get involved right now. “Public corporations generally have long range plans in effect that are designed to increase market share and profitability. I can't think of any better place on earth to be investing in -than here in North Dakota- to increase sales and profitability for the long term. Prudent business practices would seem to point to the same conclusion,” said Rep. Kasper.

The Bottom Line

Despite what he has called the loss of a battle in the N.D. Senate, Representative Jim Kasper believes fervently the online poker industry can still win this war, even taking in consideration the intimidation techniques of the DOJ. The initiative is continually gaining momentum in North Dakota; the people are genuinely interested in it.

However, “without the support of the internet poker industry, I will not move forward” says Rep. Kasper. If the main online poker companies will have the courage to engage in North Dakota with the full sponsorship of a man who is willing to share his vision with anybody who's legitimately keen on doing business the right way... above board, Rep. Kasper is firmly convinced that real, tangible regulation within the U.S. jurisdiction has never been this close to fruition in the past; it is his hope that the main figures behind the most powerful online poker rooms will decide to support this initiative in North Dakota and endure the initial storm.

“I am puzzled by the seemingly lack of interest that has suddenly developed... It's like the faucet has shut off. [The industry operators should realize the tremendous amount of interest and excitement this issue has brought to the people of North Dakota,” says Rep. Kasper, “keep in mind that there are only 47 Senators and only 44

of them didn't get it. We have 650,000 people in ND and wherever I go -as well as wherever many of my legislative colleagues go in North Dakota- the people are stopping us and congratulating us on the bill and want to know how they can help to get this law passed..."

The question really is, and this is a big question: Is there really a desire by the internet poker industry to get this DOJ threat eliminated and to be able to do business in a state within the United States---North Dakota; or is what has been accomplish so far, as far the industry is willing to go?

This is an urgent call by Representative Kasper for the online poker industry to get actively involved in North Dakota; on one hand the industry counts with the prime sponsorship of a visionary legislator, the genuine support of the people of the State of North Dakota and a historic precedent, on the other hand you have an intimidation letter with no tangible legal background. The time to regulate and to take this online business model to new unexplored heights is now; let the online poker industry make a stand... one that will be decisive. Let your voice be heard! Contact and support State Representative Jim Kasper Today!

In the bold words of this man of vision and courage --State Representative Jim Kasper- "I'm sure you didn't think this would be easy. If it were, it would have been done already. To use a poker term, I sure hope you don't fold'em too soon. This intimidation letter by the DOJ is nothing more than a bluff and we NEED to call it; we're holding the nuts."

About State Representative Jim Kasper: for a comprehensive bio on Rep. Kasper, please visit the following website: <http://www.state.nd.us/lr/assembly/58-2003/house/representatives/bios/jimkasper.html>. Contact him on:

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Once the Marketing Director of a major sportsbook and of the most respected young figures in the offshore gambling world, Will joined SportsCrew.com after having resigned to his General Manager position with Sportsbookreview.com. He now uses his knowledge of this industry and his understanding of business models to help players make an educated decision when choosing a betting outfit. Will shares his vast experience on the online gaming industry in his articles and in our sportsbooks reviews section.

SportsCrew is a high-traffic sport and gaming portal (6,339 Alexa Ranking) that focuses its resources on the promotion and expansion of the online poker and gaming industry through print media, broadcast media, website marketing, guerrilla marketing strategies and live-event sponsorships. Visit SportsCrew.com today: <http://www.SportsCrew.com>

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