

Legislative Push To Pass Sports-Betting Bill In New York Comes Up Short

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Despite an abundance of early optimism from lawmakers, a serious effort to legalize sports betting in New York has come up short as a pair of bills failed to be considered before the current legislative session came to a close late Wednesday.

There were a pair of matching bills in both the Senate and Assembly that would allow wagering at casinos and off-track betting parlors, as well as mobile devices.

“The Assembly did not have sufficient votes to move the bill,” Republican Senator John Bonacic told reporters on Wednesday. “There was just no appetite for gaming.”

Following the [U.S. Supreme Court](#)’s decision on May 14 to overturn the federal ban, New York became one of the most heavily watched states by casino owners, bookmakers and analysts betting lawmakers would pass a wide-ranging sports-betting law.

Leading the crusade was Bonacic, chairman of the Senate Racing, Gaming and Wagering Committee, who remained optimistic throughout New York’s legislative session.

But following several closed-door meetings in the Assembly, the atmosphere quickly turned sour.

Several outside factors, coupled with the Assembly’s long-standing caution about gaming legislation, resulted in Bonacic’s counterpart in the Assembly, Gary Pretlow, a Democrat and chairman of the Racing and Wagering Committee, being unable to muster the 76 votes necessary to bring the bill to the floor for a vote.

Pretlow was unavailable for comment on Wednesday.

“If states didn’t legislate prior to the [Supreme Court] decision, it put them in a tough position timing wise,” said Ethan Wilson, policy director of commerce and financial services for the National Conference of State Legislators (NCLS).

Wilson said despite the failed attempt in Albany, state lawmakers and gaming regulators can now take a look at how sports betting evolves in neighboring states.

“It’s not a cause for concern,” Wilson told GamblingCompliance on Wednesday.

“I think that New York not acting, you could argue there is a missed opportunity with some revenue left on the table but that’s offset by taking more time to analyze the issue,” Wilson said.

Another controversial issue raised by Assembly members was the belief that the National Football League (NFL) should not be rewarded with sports-betting legislation due to its handling of the recent national anthem protest by its players.

“The NFL, which is one of the organizations that has vested interesting in [sports-betting] legislation, also has a history of exploiting their athletes,” Democratic Assemblyman Walter Mosley told reporters.

“Considering the impact that sports gambling has to benefit the NFL, I decided to vote against the legislation,” Mosely said.

Although some, like Bonacic, might view this as a failed opportunity for New York, the state at a later date can still join Delaware and New Jersey as states that have regulated [sports betting](#) and allowed casinos and racetracks to begin accepting wagers.

Under the terms of a [2013 gaming law](#), wagers on professional and college sports would be allowed to be made in person and only at four casino-resorts in Upstate New York: del Lago Resort and Casino in Tyre; Tioga Downs in Nichols; Resorts World Catskills in Kiamesha Lake; and Rivers Casino and Resort in Schenectady.

Robert McLaughlin, an attorney with Hodgson Russ in Albany, said that regulations are currently being worked on by the New York State Gaming Commission that would allow for sports wagering to take place at the states four commercial casinos.

“This is a chance to learn what works under existing legislation and come back next year with something new and figure things out,” McLaughlin said.

Greg Carlin, CEO of Rivers Casino, told GamblingCompliance that once regulations are introduced, they plan on adding a sports-betting facility to their existing property.

Although neighboring New Jersey may have won the race to be taking wagers, Mike Kane, president and executive director of the New York Gaming Association said that New York is not far behind.

“There will be sports betting this year,” Kane said. “I anticipate our members will have significant discussions regarding [skins and a proposed royalty fee] moving forward.”

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