



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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Rep. Barrows supports legalized sports betting

BOSTON – State Representative F. Jay Barrows (R-Mansfield) recently voted to support legislation to legalize sports betting in Massachusetts.

House Bill 5164, *An Act regulating sports wagering*, was enacted by the House of Representatives on a vote of 151-2 in the early morning hours of August 1 and by the Senate on a voice vote shortly thereafter. The bill is now on Governor Charlie Baker's desk for his review and signature.

The final sports betting bill represents the culmination of more than two months of negotiation by a six-member conference committee that worked to resolve the differences between earlier versions of the legislation approved by the House and Senate, including the question of whether to allow for betting on college sports. Although the Senate was initially opposed to college sports betting, Representative Barrows said the compromise proposal allows for betting on professional sports as well as most college games but prohibits betting on Massachusetts college teams unless they are playing in a tournament, such as the annual NCAA March Madness basketball tournament.

Representative Barrows said legalizing sports betting in Massachusetts will help to create jobs and will allow the Commonwealth to retain millions of dollars in lost revenues that have been flowing to other states that already allow for sports betting.

House Bill 5164 authorizes the placement of in-person wagers at the state's casinos, racetracks and simulcasting facilities, as well as online wagering through a digital platform or mobile phone app. The agreement calls for in-person sports betting to be taxed at a rate of 15% of gross receipts, with online betting taxed at a rate of 20%. The Massachusetts Gaming Commission will be responsible for overseeing all sports wagering, including the drafting of regulations and the issuance of licenses.

Representative Barrows noted that sports betting will generate an estimated \$60 million in annual tax revenue for the state, with initial licensing fees expected to provide another \$70-\$80 million, along with additional revenue when the licenses are renewed every five years. The revenues and fees will be distributed as follows:

- 45% to the General Fund;
- 27.5% to the Gaming Local Aid Fund;
- 17.5% to the new Workforce Investment Trust Fund, which will help provide employment opportunities for vulnerable youth and young adults;
- 9% to the Public Health Trust Fund; and

- 1% to the new Youth Development and Achievement Fund, which will offer financial assistance to college students, as well as support for after school and out of school activities

According to Representative Barrows, House Bill 5164 prohibits the use of credit cards for placing bets. The bill takes additional steps to address the issue of gambling addiction by requiring all mobile apps and digital platforms authorized for sports wagering to prominently display the telephone number and website address for a problem gaming hotline overseen by the Department of Public Health.

Representative Barrows said the bill also creates a special commission to study the feasibility of allowing sports betting kiosks in retail establishments, and the potential effects this could have on problem gaming or gambling. The commission will report its finding and recommendations by December 31.

More than 30 states have already approved legalized sports betting, including Connecticut, New Hampshire, New York and Rhode Island.

Governor Baker has until August 11 to sign the sports wagering bill into law.

If you would like to contact the Office of Representative Barrows, you may call (617)-722-2100 to share any potential questions and concerns.