



Is D.C. on the Way to Legalizing Online Poker?

February 2, 2011

An amendment introduced to the District of Columbia Fiscal Year 2011 Budget Support Act and approved with little fanfare or advance warning could signal a major change in the law of i-gaming.

The amendment, introduced by at-large Democrat Councilmember Michael A. Brown, would allow the D.C. Lottery to administer online poker by defining the D.C. Lottery to include both “games of skill and games of chance” and allowing the games to be played over the Internet within the District. According to the fiscal impact statement issued by D.C. Chief Financial Officer Natwar M. Gandhi, online poker administered by the D.C. Lottery would generate more than \$13.5 million for the District of Columbia by 2014. It would bring in these funds through taxes levied on the winnings of District residents and through a 50-50 revenue sharing agreement with a contractor, Intralot. The D.C. Council approved the act, including this provision, by a vote of 11-2.

The act has been approved by D.C. Mayor Vincent Gray. Like all D.C. acts, it will next be sent to Congress for a 30-day review period. It remains to be seen whether members of Congress would prevent the poker measure from taking effect. Currently, although there is significant interest in a number of states, there are no legal Internet poker sites based in the United States. Late last year, a bill sponsored by Senator Harry Reid that would have fully licensed and regulated internet poker failed to garner the support necessary to become law.





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If Congress does not accept the act, it may enact a joint resolution disapproving it. If, during the 30-day review period, the President approves Congress's joint resolution, the act would be prevented from becoming law. If the President doesn't approve such a joint resolution, the bill becomes law.

We hope that this act is passed with the amendment intact so that D.C. can benefit from a badly needed new source of revenue and lead the way for other jurisdictions to implement similar laws.

Crime in the Suites is authored by the [Ifrah Law Firm](#), a Washington DC-based law firm specializing in the defense of government investigations and litigation. Our client base spans many regulated industries, particularly e-business, e-commerce, government contracts, gaming and healthcare.

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