



## One Step Towards Legal Online Gaming?

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The Wall Street Journal [has reported](#) that staffers for Sen. Harry Reid (D-Nev.), the Senate majority leader, are circulating a draft bill on Capitol Hill that would legalize Internet poker in the United States, with certain restrictions.

This comes as a bit of a surprise, as Reid has not been a supporter of online gambling in the past. But he was recently re-elected by a narrow margin with the help of financial support from major casino interests and from the Poker Players Alliance. Lately, casinos have seen their business decline or stay flat, and some of them are hoping to expand into the Internet gaming arena to increase their profits.

Reid may simply be floating a trial balloon for a proposal that might benefit one of his state's major industries. According to the Journal, the draft bill would permit only existing casinos, horse tracks, and slot-machine companies to enter the online poker business for the first two years after the bill passes.

Last July, the House Financial Services Committee approved a bill that would legalize Internet gambling, including online poker, and set up a federal regulatory framework for it. However, the House of Representatives will move to Republican control in the next Congress, and Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.), a supporter of online gambling, will yield the chairmanship of that committee, probably to Rep. Spencer Bachus (R-Ala.), an opponent. So legalization may face very tough sledding in the House, even if it has the support of the powerful Senate majority leader.

But we believe that any move in the direction of legal online poker is a positive step.

*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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