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Governor Christie Acts to Ensure Careful, Transparent Implementation of Internet Gaming

Thursday, February 7, 2013 Tags: [Bill Action](#)

Trenton, NJ - Recognizing the value and potential of internet gaming to support his Administration's efforts to revitalize Atlantic City, Governor Chris Christie today put forward a balanced proposal to support the implementation of internet gaming in New Jersey in a careful, measured and responsible way. Governor Christie concludes that now is the right time for the state to move forward and again lead the nation by becoming one of the first states to permit Internet gaming, but only with the right limitations and protections.

"This bill represents an important policy decision for the residents of New Jersey, and a historic opportunity to continue the State's leadership as a premiere destination for tourism and entertainment. Such a significant step must be carefully considered, balancing the benefits of job creation, economic development, and the continued revitalization of Atlantic City against the risks of addiction, corruption and improper influence. It is my duty as Governor to make these determinations, always mindful of my duty to guarantee the continued welfare of our families, our neighbors, and the future generations who will call our State home," said Governor Christie.

The Governor's proposal, contained in his conditional veto of Assembly Bill 2578, recommends critical, but commonsense safeguards to limit risks of gambling addiction, corruption and improper influence while fostering benefits of job creation and continued economic development and revitalization of Atlantic City.

"My proposal continues the tradition in New Jersey of a fine, careful, and well-regulated implementation of gaming. With these changes, we will increase resources to treat compulsive gambling, provide sensible safeguards to ensure careful oversight and a proper annual review of the implementation of internet gaming, along with a 10-year sunset for future leaders to carefully reevaluate internet gaming as a state policy broadly and critical transparency measures to guard against undue and improper influence and self-dealing," continued the Governor.

To accomplish these competing interests and societal protections, Governor Christie's conditional veto of Assembly Bill 2578 recommends:

- Extending existing prohibitions on casino-related employment and representation for state employees and Legislators to Internet gaming licensees and their promoters and affiliates.
- Establishing a sensible requirement that state elected officials promptly disclose their past and present representations of entities seeking or holding Internet gaming licenses.
- An enhanced level of funding for compulsive gambling treatment programs and additional financial support for other beneficial purposes for which casino gaming was originally authorized.

In his conditional veto, the Governor gave great weight to concerns over the potential spread of excessive gambling. "Our State cannot carelessly create a new generation of addicted gamers, sitting in their homes, using laptops or iPads, gambling their salaries and their futures," he said. To protect against such a proliferation of gambling addiction, the Governor further proposes the requirement of an annual analysis of the potential harms associated with these new games to be undertaken at the expense of the gaming licensees. Furthermore, he recommends that Internet gaming and its societal impact should be studied and periodically revisited. To that end, he proposes that the law sunset after a period of 10 years, giving future policy-makers the opportunity to revise and renew the law if appropriate.

The Governor's careful adoption of an Internet gaming law comes in the context and builds upon his efforts to revive Atlantic City, protect and grow its tourism base and create jobs. Since the start of his Administration, the Governor confronted the complex challenges threatening Atlantic City's unrivaled combination of natural seaside beauty, world-class attractions and easy access from around the world. One of his earliest acts as Governor was to establish an Advisory Commission on Gaming, Sports and Entertainment to study issues and develop a comprehensive approach to preserving Atlantic City's stature as a premiere resort destination. Among the results of those efforts was the establishment of a Tourism District with a comprehensive initiative to address blight and public safety.

The Tourism District Law led to a \$30 million marketing plan and the realignment of State gaming agencies to minimize bureaucracy while enhancing oversight. Also in 2011, the Governor signed a second bill into law enacting the most comprehensive overhaul of the State's casino regulations since 1977. This reform eliminated many significantly outdated regulators burdens, allowing the casino industry to reinvest and redevelop throughout the Tourism District.

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A-2578/S-1565 was sponsored by Senators Ray Lesniak (D-Union) and Jim Whelan (D-Atlantic) and Assemblymembers John Burzichelli (D-Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem), Vincent Prieto (D-Bergen and Hudson), and Ruben Ramos (D-Hudson).

A copy of the Governor's conditional veto can be found attached to the release.

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