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The _____ MICHIGAN GAMING _____ Newsletter



Michigan Gaming Control Board Takes Action Against Nine Unlicensed Online Casinos

The Michigan Gaming Control Board ("MGCB") has [issued](#) cease-and-desist letters to nine unlicensed online casinos that are violating state gaming laws. These sites, which offer casino-style games such as slots, poker, blackjack, and sports betting, have been given 14 days to halt operations or face legal action.

The operators affected by the letters include BetAnySports, CoolCat Casino, BetDSI, Go Go Gold, My Dreams Casino, NonStop Casino, Palace of Chance, Xbet Casino, and WagerWeb.

MGCB Executive Director Henry Williams emphasized the risks posed by these unlicensed operators, stating, "These unlicensed operators are not only in violation of Michigan's laws but also pose significant risks to consumers by offering limited and often unreliable withdrawal options. Our role is to protect Michigan residents by ensuring that all online gambling activities are carried out legally and responsibly."

The crackdown comes amid the rise of unregulated online gambling, a growing concern in the U.S. A 2022 American Gaming Association report estimated over \$510 billion is wagered annually with illegal operators, resulting in substantial tax revenue losses. Many of these operators use sweepstakes methods to bypass regulations but lack necessary consumer protections.

The MGCB's investigation revealed that the targeted websites were operating without a Michigan gambling license, violating key state laws.

These include the Lawful Internet Gaming Act, which restricts online gaming to licensed operators, and the Michigan Penal Code, which broadly prohibits illegal gambling.

In light of these violations, the MGCB is prepared to take further legal action in cooperation with the Michigan Attorney General's Office if the sites do not comply. The Board urges Michigan residents to verify the legality of any gambling site and report illegal operations through their hotline or email.

The MGCB continues its commitment to consumer protection, ensuring that online gaming in Michigan is fair and regulated.

Pokagon Band Launches Four Winds Ventures, LLC to Expand into Commercial Gaming and Hospitality

Dowagiac, Mich. – February 5, 2025 — The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians has announced the establishment of Four Winds Ventures, LLC, a new entity focused on pursuing opportunities in commercial gaming, hospitality, and related sectors. The company is governed by a seven-member Board of Directors, appointed by the Pokagon Band Tribal Council. Board members will include both Pokagon Band Citizens and non-citizens who meet specific eligibility requirements.

Matthew Wesaw, Pokagon Band Tribal Council Chairman, expressed excitement about the new venture: "The Pokagon Band has had tremendous success operating our Four Winds Casino Resorts at four locations in Michigan and Indiana. This success has not only generated revenue to support our Tribal Nation, helping us provide essential government services to our citizens, but it has created tremendous economic and employment opportunities for surrounding

communities and the region. We look forward to growing Four Winds Ventures as we continue to diversify our business holdings, including gaming, hospitality, architecture, construction, engineering, commercial real estate, and cannabis."

Mary Smith, Chair of the Four Winds Ventures Board and Chief Operating Officer of Four Winds Casinos, shared her enthusiasm: "We are extremely pleased to leverage our expertise and success in gaming and hospitality for close to 20 years. We have developed and expanded four casino resorts, established Four Winds Casinos as the premier gaming destinations in the Midwest, and have been recognized among the top-ranked casino resorts outside of Las Vegas. We look forward to introducing Four Winds Ventures and partnering with organizations to advance their business objectives."

The Tribal Council has appointed five experienced executives to the Four Winds Ventures Board, including Mary Smith, Raquel Buari (Executive VP of Administration), Scott Brewer (Senior VP of Community Affairs/Government Relations/Security), Brittany Frenchko (VP of Database & Analytics), and Ronald Sorce (Director of Sales & Catering). These individuals bring decades of industry expertise to the new venture.

Additionally, the Pokagon Band Tribal Council is seeking applications for two remaining open seats on the Four Winds Ventures Board. Applicants with experience in private sector management, business administration, accounting/banking, or law are encouraged to apply via the link provided.

For more information, visit:

[Pokagon Band](#) | [Four Winds Casino](#)

Google Announces Significant Update to Gambling & Games Advertising Policy

On April 14, 2025, Google will [update](#) its Gambling and Games policy. The update will include revisions to country specific guidelines and provide more detailed explanations of the different gambling categories.

A preview of the revised policy is [available now](#), and will be available until the changes take effect on April 14, 2025.

Key points for advertisers include:

- Ensuring valid, up-to-date gambling licenses and reporting any changes.
- Obtaining required certifications based on the gambling category and targeted regions.
- Reviewing country-specific restrictions to avoid ad disapprovals.
- Strict compliance with the new rules for social casino games to prevent penalties.

The revised policy marks a major shift toward tighter regulation of gambling-related content on Google platforms, and advertisers in the sector will need to adapt quickly to stay compliant.

Gaming Attorneys Point to Florida Lawsuit as Harbinger of Industry's Fight Against Sweepstakes

The ongoing lawsuit Knapp vs VGW Holdings in Florida is emerging as a critical case that could set a precedent for the industry's fight against sweepstakes-based gambling. This lawsuit, [discussed](#) during the Indian Gaming Association's ("IGA") New Normal webinar, focuses on the proliferation of sweepstakes casinos, a growing concern for legal

operators.

Victor Rocha and Jason Giles, IGA's conference chair and executive director, hosted the webinar with gaming attorneys James Meggesto and Samir Patel from Holland & Knight LLP. The discussion revolved around the legal strategies to combat the rise of sweepstakes casinos, which often operate under a "freemium" model that complicates the line between legal gaming and illegal gambling. The two men authored an article on the suit on January 21, 2025 and its potential implications for the industry

Patel emphasized that sweepstakes are a top issue impacting the industry and that he's surprised by the lack of urgency in addressing them. Florida's unique position, with clear sweepstakes laws under Chapter 849 of the Florida Statutes, makes the state a critical battleground in the legal fight. Specifically, Section 849.08 prohibits unlicensed lotteries, while Section 849.14 bans gambling games in which money or something of value is wagered. Sweepstakes casinos argue that they offer entertainment, but critics say they are illegally offering a cash exchange for sweepstakes coins.

The case has gained further attention because payment processors, like WorldPay, are named as defendants. The company was denied a motion to dismiss in late November 2024. As Patel and Meggesto noted, this could signal a shift in the industry, where cutting off payment processors may be the most effective means to curb the spread of sweepstakes. Patel compared this to a previous lawsuit in New Jersey involving Apple and Google.

The case is scheduled for mediation on April 18, with discovery set for October and a trial planned for the fall. The attorneys hope for a

full trial, which would offer transparency and deeper legal insight into the issue. However, Patel warned that sweepstakes operators might continue to settle cases rather than face trials, using arbitration clauses to avoid further legal scrutiny.

In the long term, Meggesto and Patel stressed that the best solution lies in changing state laws or introducing new legislation to block sweepstakes operators. Although the National Council of Legislators from Gaming States has included language banning sweepstakes in its model iGaming legislation, its adoption remains uncertain. The attorneys agreed that the most compelling argument for lawmakers would be the billions in lost tax revenue due to unregulated sweepstakes casinos. As Meggesto put it, “Money talks, and that’s when it starts to hit home.”