

Turkey clamps down on illegal sites and users

Turkey unveiled new draft legislation on 7 May which would expand the handing of prison sentences to payment processors, advertisers or affiliates on unlicensed gaming websites, while increasing sentence length for operators; also, players on these sites could now receive fines of up to 500k Turkish lira.

“The main motivation is to deter the public from spending money on gambling, which culturally is frowned upon, and to prevent substantial revenue loss from being unable to tax income generated by uncontrolled websites,” said Serkan Ictem, Partner at Ictem Legal.

The proposed law will increase authorities’ ability to combat illegal activity by preventing money transfers relating to illegal sites and by hastening the shutdown of these sites. Turkey’s Telecommunications Agency would be able to ban access to websites without Court judgments. “We are of the opinion that if the activities of users are supervised in an effective way, the users will prefer to use licensed gambling providers and illegal online gambling activities will be decreased,” said Gökben Erdem Dirican, Senior Partner at Pekin & Pekin.

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US gaming bills proliferate as California edges forward

Eight Californian tribes, including the Pechanga Band of Luiseno Indians, published on 15 May a draft bill to legalise i-poker, the Internet Poker Consumer Protection Act 2013. Three Californian i-poker bills now exist, including those by Sen. Wright and Sen. Correa respectively.

“The Pechanga tribe is very influential in the state and has not supported any previous i-poker initiatives,” said Rachel Hirsch, Associate at Ifrah Law. “Its support is crucial.” The latest bill specifies a \$5 million fee per licence; Wright’s bill proposes \$30 million.

The latest bill is limited to poker and would license only federally-recognised tribes who operate land-based facilities. This bill has however missed the 22 February cut-off for introduction to the current legislative session.

“I just don’t see how a brand

new bill can be introduced,” said Harsh Parikh, Associate at Snell & Wilmer. “They could amend Wright’s bill or Correa’s bill.”

“There are many interested stakeholders in California; Wright’s bill attempts to include them all. Correa’s is basically a placeholder where it is hoped that language acceptable to at least the primary gaming tribes can be included,” explains Linda Shorey, Partner at K&L Gates. “The [latest] proposal may be to assist with what language should be in Correa’s bill.”

In Pennsylvania, Rep. Tina Davis introduced on 22 April an online casino bill that would enable licensed casinos to apply for i-gaming licences. Shorey explains that “This is the first time that a bill concerning i-gaming has been introduced. It is too early to know if there is a possibility for i-gaming to be authorised during this legislative session.”

In Illinois, a bill to expand casino activity in the state has been altered and its i-gaming section emerged on 16 May as a standalone draft. “Illinois Governor Quinn has expressed concerns regarding i-gaming,” explains Jennifer Carleton, Shareholder at Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck. “A separate i-gaming draft bill is presumably an attempt to address this concern independently. Any Illinois i-gaming bill is unlikely to pass gubernatorial muster without significant player protections, transparency and comprehensive regulatory oversight by Illinois regulators.”

California thus may be the candidate for the next state to legalise i-gaming. “I expect some form of i-poker legislation to go farther this legislative session than ever,” said Parikh. “It seems the question is not if, but rather how i-poker will be legalised in California.”

Canadian businesses support Bill on single-event sports betting

Several Canadian Chambers of Commerce sent a letter on 30 April to lobby senators to approve Bill C-290, which would legalise single-event sports betting in Canada. The Bill, which was passed unanimously by Canada’s House of Commons, is now being debated before the Senate as part of its third reading.

“The Senators are not so acquainted with the issues surrounding Bill C-290, namely the ‘integrity of sport’ and ‘problem gambling,’ so they rely on third party’s to provide

arguments for and against the Bill,” said Cory Levi, Attorney at Lazarus Charbonneau.

Bill C-290 has been with the Senate since March 2012, because of lobbying by sports associations and anti-gaming organisations. Currently only ‘parlay’ bets, which involve betting on three sporting events at a time, are allowed; the reason for this is simple thinks Danielle Bush, Partner at Chitiz Pathak LLP, “if you need to bet on three events at a time, it makes match-fixing difficult.”

According to the Canadian

Gaming Association, single-event sports betting in Canada is estimated to be worth up to CAD\$40bn annually with up to \$4bn passing through offshore online betting sites. “It is said that Canada is losing out on \$10bn of sports betting revenue to ‘foreign operators,’ which is the primary reason Bill C-290 was presented,” adds Levi.

“Given the issues the Senate is facing, including a public audit of senators’ expenses,” adds Bush, “I am pessimistic about it passing within the next month or so.”