

Bill to allow college sports betting faces pushback

Connor Radnovich

Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Through the Oregon Lottery and DraftKings, Oregonians are currently able to place bets on the outcomes and achievements of professional sports games, teams and athletes.

Betting on college sports, however, is banned.

A bill in the Oregon Legislature would legalize betting on college sports. But in its initial public hearing it faced pushback from tribal representatives and anti-gambling organizations.

Senate Bill 1503, sponsored by Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, would allow the Oregon Lottery to conduct gambling opportunities based on the outcomes of college sports games.

The bill came into the hearing with a pair of amendments, which would ban betting on individual athletic performance and direct net proceeds toward funding the Oregon Opportunity Grant program, the state's largest publicly funded, need-based grant program for college students.

Betting on college sports is already occurring in the unregulated and fraud-prone illegal market, Courtney said, and allowing it to occur within the Oregon Lottery would protect gamblers.

Furthermore, directing the revenue toward grants for college students would have a significant impact on edu-



A Oregon Lottery sign hangs in the window of The Brick Bar & Broiler in downtown Salem on Thursday, Oct. 9, 2014. ANNA REED / STATESMAN JOURNAL FILE

cation funding, where there is never enough money to go around, he said.

Courtney estimated the new revenue could add up to 3,000 new grants for college students.

"This will stabilize and permanently fund Opportunity Grants in a very powerful way," Courtney said. "This is a major source of funding, in the millions of dollars."

Courtney said a drafting error led to the amendment directing all net revenues toward the Oregon Opportunity Grants (it was supposed to be 50%) but he actually likes the amendment as currently constructed.

These amendments garnered some praise from bill opponents, but not enough to change their underlying objection to the bill.

Justin Martin, representing the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, said SB 1503 would pull funds away from Oregon's Native American tribes, which

largely rely on casino revenues to fund essential services.

Some tribes have the ability to offer college sports betting, but can only do so on reservation lands, which are primarily located in rural areas and some distance from the state's population hubs.

Tribes are already being "inundated" by gambling expansion, Martin said, both through attempted expansion by the Oregon Lottery and out-of-state interests trying to enter the Oregon market.

Martin encouraged lawmakers to set up a task force to study gambling expansion efforts, advancements in technology, impacts on key stakeholders and how other states regulate gambling.

"(SB 1506) would be taking money out of tribes' pockets," Martin said. "We need to take a pause and study this and look at the right way to do things in Oregon moving forward."

Courtney disagreed: "In no way does

this bill take away from casinos, casino betting at all."

Kitty Martz, executive director of Voices of Problem Gambling Recovery, also supported the creation of a task force to study gambling in Oregon and the state's current regulatory framework.

House Bill 4046 would create such a task force; it has not yet received a public hearing.

"We're becoming widely known in the gambling industry as the wild west, where anything goes with gambling in Oregon," she said.

Martz said the 24-hour access to gambling via mobile devices is much different than the kinds of "traditional" lottery games that existed when Oregon voters approved the creation of a state lottery in 1984.

The current paradigm — which allows for greater gambling availability — also carries a higher risk of addiction, she said. This availability would also impact tribes' current casino operations, she said.

"There's every bit of evidence that it would, in fact, interfere with what the tribes are doing with their brick and mortar facilities," Martz said.

Reporter Connor Radnovich covers the Oregon Legislature and state government. Contact him at cradnovich@statesmanjournal.com or 503-399-6864, or follow him on Twitter at @CDRadnovich.

Permits

Continued from Page 1A

confusing and align the permit season with when people are typically going."

Permits are mainly purchased through Recreation.gov.

Permit season dates change

The permit season will be in place June 15 to Oct. 15, instead of the Friday before Memorial Day to the last Friday in September.

That means anyone entering the 450,000 acres of wilderness backcountry during those dates will need overnight permits if they plan on camping, or a day-use permit if they plan on hiking from 19 of the most popular trailheads.

"Last year people had permits in early June that were unusable due to snow and road conditions," the Forest Service said in a news release, "while the wildernesses were accessible in

early October."

A large number of people bought permits for the McKenzie Pass area in 2020, only to discover the highway to the trailheads hadn't yet opened.

Day-use permits only available 10 or 2 days in advance

Last season, the Forest Service released a large batch of day-use permits in April. While they were snapped up fast, more than 50% of them were never used nor canceled and essentially went to waste, according to Forest Service data.

This season, the agency will not offer any day-use permits that far in advance and only issue them in a 10- and two-day rolling window during the permit season.

For example, at the popular Green Lakes Trailhead, a total of 90 permits will be available each day. Of those, 54 will become available 10 days in advance and 36 will come open two days in advance.

The idea is that people will have a

better idea if they're going to hike closer to the date, rather than months before, and can check weather and conditions before committing to buying the \$1 permit. Last year, lots of people didn't use permits due to smoky skies or issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Overnight permits now based on date of entry

Last season, people that went backpacking and stayed overnight had to get a permit that blocked out each individual night they were in the wilderness. That often led to people reserving more days than they ended up using.

This season, "the overnight permit quota is now based on the date of entry; meaning there is a daily entry quota for each trailhead allowing new groups to start their trip each day," the news release said. "This simplifies the reservation system because people will not have to block out all the days of their planned trip."

How will overnight permits be distributed?

Forty percent of overnight permits will go on sale on April 5 for advanced reservations. Once the permit season begins, the remaining 60% of overnight permits will be available in a seven-day rolling window, officials said.

Number of permits slightly increased for day-use

The quotas for each of the trailheads in the three wilderness areas was slightly increased on the day-use side, and slightly decreased for overnight permits, although the changes mean more should be available, officials said.

Zach Urness has been an outdoors reporter in Oregon for 15 years and is host of the Explore Oregon Podcast. Urness is the author of "Best Hikes with Kids: Oregon" and "Hiking Southern Oregon." He can be reached at zurness@statesmanjournal.com or (503) 399-6801. Find him on Twitter at @ZachsORoutdoors.

Services

Continued from Page 1A

About 8 to 10 "vendors" were to be in place to provide general health checks, hair care services, foot care, bike repair and veterinarian checks on pets.

But cold weather and rain conspired to keep the Count Fair from happening,

although the count itself went on as planned and normal services went on as usual.

"With the count going on, it ended up being no different than what we do on a daily basis," Burdine-Rea said.

While the PIT Count Fair itself didn't materialize, the resource center was open and the homeless were able to "access our case management services, supplies, food, hospitality and to get out

of the elements," she said.

Twenty-two people were counted, she said, which was "slightly less" than in the last year of the count before the pandemic hit two years ago.

"With these type of events, we give the homeless access to services they don't typically have the opportunity to access," she said. "People who need these services are not always going to these events, especially as new people

are going in and out at the time. But when we host things that really encourage and draw them in by providing the services, I think we have better access to them.

"One of my wishes would be to do a fair like this every quarter."

Freelance writer/photographer Geoff Parks is based in Salem. Have a Silverton story idea? E-mail him at geoff-parks@gmail.com.

Graduation

Continued from Page 1A

ments," Oregon Department of Education spokesman Marc Siegel said in an email to the Statesman Journal.

Siegel said Oregon students still have to meet the state's "rigorous credit ... and personalized learning requirements" to graduate. Students must get 24 credits, including four in language arts and three in math.

"Currently, no other state requires more credits to graduate from high school," Siegel said. "The only change is that students do not have to take and pass an additional state-approved assessment option in reading, writing or mathematics in order to graduate."

As of 2018, 11 other states and Washington, D.C. also required 24 credits to graduate. All other U.S. states required fewer credits.

Siegel said the suspension of the requirement "does not appear to be impacting" graduation rates.

"Available information from local school officials, as well as data regarding fifth-year graduates, suggests that the Assessment of Essential Skills requirement is not the primary reason that most students are not graduating in Oregon," Siegel said.

Graduation rates for the 2019-20 school year rose 1.3 percentage points. The rates for the 2020-21 school year fell for the first time since Oregon began calculating them in 2008. The rate was 80.6%, compared to 82.6% in 2019-20.

Siegel could not provide information about what specific requirements Oregon students are not meeting when they do not graduate, referring the Statesman Journal to local school districts for that information.



Graduates walk out to their seats during McNary High School's 56th annual commencement ceremony at Volcanoes Stadium in Keizer, Oregon on Wednesday, June 9, 2021. BRIAN HAYES / STATESMAN JOURNAL

The Oregon Department of Education does not collect information on student credit attainment from districts, other than a measure where the state checks how many 9th graders enrolled in their district for at least half the year have obtained at least 25% of the credits they need to graduate.

Siegel said students "are much more likely to graduate if they enter 9th grade

ready to take Algebra 1, have high rates of attendance and/or are on-track (for) graduation at the end of 9th grade."

Programs "that engage students," like music and career and technical education, also correlate with a higher likelihood of graduating on time, Siegel said.

This story is one in a series of articles

checking statements in Gov. Kate Brown's final annual "State of the State" speech.

Claire Withycombe is a reporter at the Statesman Journal. Contact her at cwithycombe@statesmanjournal.com, 503-910-3821 or follow on Twitter @kcwithycombe.