

News Coverage on Casino Gambling

They're off! Pols push sports bets

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Place your bets here!

A Queens lawmaker wants to legalize betting on professional sports in New York — and his proposed legislation has the backing of one of the state's top prosecutors, Brooklyn DA Charles "Joe" Hynes, *The Post* has learned.

State Sen. Tony Avella's bill would allow betting on baseball, football, basketball, hockey and soccer at the Aqueduct and Yonkers racinos and all casinos across the state, as well as off-track betting parlors outside the city.

Currently, only betting on horse racing is legal.

Such legalized betting in the sports-crazed Big Apple could become a cash cow for the state, where fans passionately follow — and often illegally bet on — the Yankees, Mets, Giants, Jets Knicks and Rangers.

Citing a study conducted by the New York City Partnership five years ago, Democrat Avella said betting on pro sports would generate more than \$2 billion.

He said the state's cut from the racino sports book would go to fund schools.

"We have to think out of the box. I'd rather come up with revenue this way rather than raising property taxes," said Avella.

He claimed said studies show illegal sports betting generates more than \$100 billion nationally and as much as \$15 billion to \$30 billion in New York City alone — much of it feeding organized crime.

And that's why Hynes is supporting the measure. He said sports betting should be regulated by the government and benefit the public, not crooks.

"Right now, sports betting is a cash cow for the mob," said Hynes. "I've been in favor of legalized sports betting. It has always made sense to me."

Hynes feels so strongly about authorizing sports betting that he will write letters to urge Gov. Cuomo and the state District Attorneys Association to back the legislation.

"It would be a huge win for the state of New York," he said.

Cuomo spokesman Rich Azzopardi said the governor's office would review the bill.

The odds of approving sports betting are long.

Avella's bill, which would amend the state Constitution, requires approval in two successive votes by the Legislature as well as by the voters.

And a 1992 federal law bars sports betting in all but four states — Nevada, Delaware, Montana and Oregon.

But public sentiment is shifting.

New Jersey is spearheading an effort to sanction sports betting in the Garden State. Gov. Chris Christie in January approved a law to legalize sports betting after Jersey voters gave their blessing in a referendum.

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