



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
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**Attorney General announces support for legislation to
clarify Virginia's gambling laws**

RICHMOND (January 18, 2011) – Virginia Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli today announced his support for new legislation which clarifies Virginia's gambling laws. Questions about the law arose in 2010 when a number of Internet gambling businesses started to appear around the commonwealth.

Companion bills, House Bill 1700 and Senate Bill 1195, patroned by Delegate Clay Athey (R-Front Royal) and Senator Mark Obenshain (R-Harrisonburg), declare that the purchase of a product or other thing of value as a condition for an opportunity to receive a benefit through a game of chance constitutes illegal gambling. The bills are declaratory of existing law, meaning that the bills will not be construed to mean that gambling in this fashion was ever considered legal prior to the time of the legislation's passage. Past prosecutions will be upheld, current prosecutions will continue, and future prosecutions will include this form of gambling.

Currently, some local jurisdictions are wrongly led by gambling advocates to believe that if any product, no matter how inconsequential, is offered along with an opportunity to gamble, Virginia's gambling statute has been legally circumvented (for example, selling a 10 cent pencil for \$5 and including in the sale a "free" opportunity to gamble on an Internet game). These gambling operations, which seek to characterize themselves as legitimate sweepstakes games, are currently operating or have operated in the following localities thus far: Warren County, Front Royal, Petersburg, Chesapeake, Danville, Emporia, Hampton, Richmond, Caroline, Spotsylvania, Virginia Beach, Roanoke, Chesterfield, and Pittsylvania.

"House Bill 1700 and Senate Bill 1195 will give helpful clarification to businesses considering engaging in this activity, as well as commonwealth's attorneys and law enforcement officers across Virginia," said Cuccinelli. "The bills provide clarification as well as a solid affirmation that this form of gambling has always constituted illegal gambling, and is subject to prosecution under existing Virginia law.

"These stores are introducing video gambling to Virginia under the guise of operating legal sweepstakes. Everyone sees through the gaming industry's ruse, and Senate Bill 1195 will make clear that casino gambling is neither welcome nor legal in Virginia," said Obenshain.

"Last year, I successfully fought the out-of-state criminal elements who placed free-spin slot machines in Virginia to promote their criminal enterprises," said Athey. "This year, these same forces are invading Virginia's localities with illegal Internet casinos posing as legal sweepstakes. House Bill 1700 clearly sends a message that this latest attempt to open Internet casinos in Virginia will not be tolerated. As the saying goes, 'What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas.' We don't want Las Vegas crime here in Virginia."