



# Montana Tavern Times

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## Sports-betting RFP wanted

### Montana firms seek chance to bid contract

By Jorie Tash

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Several industry representatives questioned the Lottery's plan to allow Intralot to manage sports betting in the state without calling for bid proposals from other interested companies during a Montana Lottery Commission meeting July 11.

Intralot is a Greece-based company that specializes in managing lottery services for a variety of government entities, including several U.S. states. Montana Lottery is currently contracted with Intralot to manage its lottery operation, but industry reps said that contract does not include the management of sports-betting, which the



Paul Tash photo

**MONTANA LOTTERY** Commission Chairman Wilbur Rehmann, center in blue shirt, makes a point about sports betting last month during the

Commission's meeting in Helena. On his right is Lottery Director Angela Wong and to his left is Commissioner Leo Prigge.

Montana Legislature passed this year. Lottery's contract with Intralot was last renewed in 2015.

Ronda Wiggers, the lobbyist for the Montana Coin-Machine Operators Association (MCMOA), told the Commission, "it is our

understanding that the Lottery believes sports betting was included in the 2015 contract with Intralot."

"MCMOA does not agree with that decision and respectfully requests that the Commission go

through the RFP (request-for-proposal) process to determine which provider will best serve Montana," Wiggers said. "MCMOA has members that are interested in bidding for the Lottery contract, and these

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companies have more experience in the United States sports-betting market than Intralot does, and we feel that in order to obtain the best provider for Montana, the Lottery needs to go through the full (bid) process."

Neil Peterson, executive director of the Gambling Industry Association, also urged the Commission to open the contract up to bids from other companies.

"I'm hearing rumblings from within the industry that should the Commission go ahead and do a no-bid contract, that you could have some litigation over that," he said.

He cited the problems Washington, D.C., has had getting its sports-betting program off the ground due to similar issues with vendor contracts.

"I understand the need for speed," said Peterson, "but I think we should slow it down."

The Commission did not act or comment on the appeals for an RFP to run sports-betting for the Montana Lottery.

The Montana Legislature passed two sports-betting bills last session: House Bill 725, which allowed the Montana Lottery to



Paul Tash photo

**GAMING INDUSTRY** Association Executive Director Neil Peterson urges the Lottery Commission during its meeting July 11 to request proposals to run sports betting.

operate sports betting, and Senate Bill 330, which would have allowed private Montana companies to operate sports betting.

However, Gov. Steve Bullock vetoed SB330, and though similar legislation could be introduced in 2021, several Montana companies and their experienced sports-book partners seek an opportunity to run the Lottery's sports-betting operations.

Wiggers said giving the sports-betting contract to Intralot runs contrary to a reason Gov. Bullock stated for vetoing SB330:

"I find it ironic that in his veto message, (Bullock) expressed concerns that the private market would allow

international firms to participate, but now the Lottery appears to be planning to hand the contract to Greek-based

Intralot," Wiggers told the panel.

Though the Commission did not discuss the RFP idea, Chairman Wilbur Rehmann did state a need for caution, saying that the Lottery should get input from Montana High School Association and representatives of university sports programs to ensure athletes are protected from some of the potential pitfalls of legal sports-betting, such as "the lure of cash" to be gained from illegal activities like point shaving.

Lottery Director Angela Wong said, "it's important to the Lottery to do it right, too; we want to see this successful as well."

"If we need more time, that's okay," she said.

Finally, Montana Council on Problem Gaming (MCPG) director Brad Longcake implored the Commission to "elevate the importance" of MCPG's work in its budget and find ways to increase awareness of the program's needs and services. On sports betting, Longcake said that "new opportunities present new challenges," and that he believes the MCPG will need increased industry support as the new form of betting becomes available in Montana.

"We need support to make everything work," he told the Commission.