

Gambling via cell phone may be an option

By Liz Benston, Las Vegas Sun

Imagine gambling on digital blackjack on your smart phone while stuck in traffic in the Spaghetti Bowl or dropping money into a slot machine while doing 80 across a high-desert highway west of Ely.

This will be the newest face of legal gambling if one local company gets its way: playing the games anywhere in Nevada – even lounging in your backyard pool.

Cantor Gaming says it will press the Nevada Legislature this year to allow gambling using the same 21st century technology that surfs the Internet, sends e-mail, views movies and listens to music. It's a big leap for a state that only recently allowed gamblers to use handheld gambling devices in select casinos. Gamblers may also bet remotely, but only on sporting events.

"People want to be able to (gamble) where and when they choose," Wall Street veteran and Cantor Gaming CEO Lee Amaitis said.

Significant regulatory and political hurdles stand in his way, however.

Nevada law allows gamblers within the state's borders to make sports bets remotely by setting up a casino account and downloading software onto a home computer, logging on by cell phone or by using a pager. Such gambling doesn't violate federal prohibitions of Internet gambling because it occurs over a private wireless network rather than the World Wide Web and doesn't cross state lines.

American Wagering, which operates the Leroy's sports books, received regulatory approval last year for technology enabling gamblers in Nevada to make sports bets using BlackBerrys.

Applying that technology to casino games such as blackjack, slots and roulette is a relatively small leap for a company like Cantor. For regulators who must consider the business and social implications of new gambling technology, it's a potential chasm.

"This would be a huge policy shift for the state," Gaming Control Board Chairman Mark Lipparelli said.

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