

Nevada allows betting on non-sports events

By Bill O'Driscoll, Reno Gazette-Journal

Imagine placing a bet on the Academy Awards. Or "American Idol." Or the Great Reno Balloon Race or Best in the West Nugget Rib Cook-off.

State gaming regulators recently revised the rules to allow wagering in Nevada's race and sports books beyond sporting events. The move could generate new revenue in a financially ailing industry, as well as draw casual bettors into sports books.

"We've thought about some fun things, like the rib cook-off, or even something as off the wall as our pig race," said Beth Cooney, executive director of marketing at John Ascuaga's Nugget, sponsor of the annual Best in the West Nugget Rib Cook-off over the Labor Day weekend.

Bill Eadington, director of the Institute for the Study of Gambling and Commercial Gaming at the University of Nevada, Reno, said the challenge will be in marketing a new betting event.

"Can you find events that will have popular appeal and clientele that will wager on them?" he said. "It's a bit of a gimmick. But it provides additional dimension. Betting like this is already available in the U.K. We've really been constrained to just sports."

No formal requests have gone before the Nevada Gaming Control Board yet, officials say, and any that do will receive a thorough review to assure they meet standards set out in regulation.

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