

Poll: Majority of Californians support legal online gambling

By Laurel Rosenhall, Sacramento Bee

A majority of California voters – especially those under age 40 – would like to see the state tax Internet poker and make the game legal, according to a Field Poll released today.

Among all age groups, 53 percent of voters support the idea, the poll says, while 41 percent oppose it. Among voters under age 40, however, support grows to 73 percent.

The Legislature has been discussing proposals to make online gambling legal in California for the past two years. The bills stalled as various gambling interests fought over who would be able to profit from the endeavor.

Parties involved in the debate – owners of Indian casinos, card rooms and race tracks – are supposed to meet this fall to hash out a compromise proposal for the Legislature to consider next year. Lawmakers who support Internet gambling have said it could bring hundreds of millions to state coffers.

The potential for the state to make money by taxing Internet poker is the main reason Irene Woods of Fair Oaks said she wants California to permit Internet gambling.

“It would be another source of revenue for the state, and we’re in dire financial problems,” said Woods, 79, who participated in the survey.

“I don’t see anything immoral about gambling anyway. What’s the difference if you go to Tahoe or Reno, or if you do it online?”

Poll respondent Timothy Dwyer of Stanislaus County saw it another way. He said the potential for the state to make money isn't worth the risk to players who could wind up gambling too much.

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