

Romney faces tough decision regarding online gambling

By Karoun Demirjian, Las Vegas Sun

When it comes to reviving the economy in Nevada, politicians of different stripes hawk different solutions.

Democrats say the future is in green energy. Republicans advocate loosening regulations on mining permits. But both parties in this state agree that one of the biggest potential employment engines is legalizing online poker: Do that and, as Sen. Harry Reid once put it, you'll create "jobs, and lots of jobs."

Nevada's front-runner in the Republican race for the presidential nomination, however, isn't yet sure.

"I haven't come down on online poker," Romney said in an interview with the Sun last month, explaining he had yet to take a serious look at the issue.

But then he did something most politicians don't: He voluntarily offered a promise, and a timeline, to deliver a more specific answer.

"I will, and I'll give you an answer," he continued. "Before the caucuses come along, I'll give you an answer on that."

The pledge sets up a potentially thorny decision for Romney: Say you're against legalizing and regulating the online poker industry, and you risk upsetting some Nevadans; say you're for it, and you risk upsetting the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Romney's Mormon faith has stirred headlines elsewhere in the country, but in Nevada, there's never really been any fault lines between Romney's politics and his personal faith.

“Romney does not talk about it ... and I don’t think Nevadans cared. Being a Mormon isn’t that much of an issue in Nevada or anywhere in the West, for that matter,” said Eric Herzik, professor of political science at UNR. “Mormonism is a longtime part of Western society.”

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