

Nevada governor backs legalizing online poker

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Sun

A day after a prominent sports book director was arrested in connection with an alleged illegal offshore gambling ring, Gov. Brian Sandoval has sent a letter to federal lawmakers supporting a bill to legalize Internet poker.

Sandoval's letter, dated Oct. 25, is addressed to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, House Speaker John Boehner, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi. It outlines a case for a federal framework enabling states to regulate their own gaming industries in the online environment.

"While many states have long-standing proficiency in regulating brick-and-mortar gaming within their boundaries, the advent of Internet gaming has introduced a borderless element that state regulation alone cannot address," Sandoval's letter said.

Sandoval said he supports the efforts of Reid and Arizona Sen. Jon Kyl, who have worked on legislation to legalize Internet poker.

Nevada is among several states that have approved legislation and regulations addressing in-state online poker. Several companies already have been licensed to offer online poker and are in various stages of developing systems to begin play as soon as early 2013.

Sandoval said the Reid-Kyl legislation not only would coordinate oversight of the industry but would offer consumer protections.

"A sensible federal approach would preserve state authority to ban gaming within its borders, protect minors from exposure to online gaming and protect legitimate consumers from illegal offshore operators," Sandoval's letter says. "The Reid-Kyl approach would accomplish these essential objectives while introducing strong consumer protections into a space where none currently exist.

"As governor of a state that jealously guards its primacy in the regulation of gaming, I am pleased the proposal maintains state authority to regulate online poker operators built upon a basic federal foundation of common-sense regulatory principles. The basic tenets are similar to those Nevada's gold-standard regulatory structure is built upon: prohibition on self-regulation, baseline requirements for licensees and protections against monopolies in the market."