

N.J. lobbies to change sports betting law

By Wayne Parry, AP

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. – New Jersey is bolstering its legal arguments as it tries to get the U.S. Supreme Court to consider its effort to overturn a ban on legalized sports betting in all but four states.

In a filing submitted Tuesday, the state says the federal law needs to be reviewed immediately.

Theodore Olson, who won the Bush v. Gore election case in 2000, says the ban impermissibly restricts states' rights. He also says the high court needs to consider the way the law treats states differently.

The law restricts sports betting to states that met a 1991 deadline to pass laws approving it: Delaware, Montana, Nevada and Oregon. At the time, New Jersey was given the chance to become the fifth state but failed to act during a prescribed window.

Major League Baseball, the National Football League, the National Basketball Association and the National Hockey League, along with the National Collegiate Athletic Association, all support the ban, saying it upholds the integrity of the games in the public's mind.

In his filing, Olson wrote that the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act needs to be reviewed by the court immediately. He noted that sports betting was overwhelmingly favored in a non-binding referendum put before New Jersey voters.

“New Jersey's citizens voted overwhelmingly in favor of sports

wagering, and their representatives seek to respond, through the enactment of positive law," Olson wrote.

No federal law directly prohibits individuals from betting on sports, the state argues. Rather, the law makes it illegal for a "governmental entity" to license or authorize sports wagering activity. New Jersey argues that Congress has no authority to regulate the approval or disapproval of activities expressed by individual states.

The state has been trying to overturn the federal law banning sports betting in the other 46 states since 2009, when a state lawmaker sued the federal government over the ban. Most recently, Gov. Chris Christie decided in 2012 to try to overturn the ban, knowing it would be an uphill fight.

New Jersey wants legalized sports betting as a way to generate new revenue and customers for its struggling casinos and horse racing tracks, as well as to garner taxes from money now flowing to illegal betting operations.

The Supreme Court could indicate this month whether or not it will hear the case.