

New Jersey Governor To Review New Sports-Betting Bill

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[Tony Batt, GamblingCompliance](#) [1]

New Jersey Governor Chris Christie still has not decided whether to sign a sports-betting bill that passed the state legislature just three days after the U.S. Supreme Court declined to review New Jersey's challenge to a federal wagering ban.

"The bill is under review and a determination hasn't been made one way or the other just yet," Kevin Roberts, a spokesman for Governor Christie, said Tuesday of bill [S.2250](#) [2], which passed by overwhelming margins of 38-1 in the state Senate and 63-6 in the state Assembly last week.

In addition to signing or vetoing the bill, the governor has a third choice, according to gaming attorney Griffin Finan of Ifrah Law in Washington, D.C.

"One option for Governor Christie is to not take any action during the 45-day period [after passage of] the bill, which could allow the bill to become law without his signature and provide him with an avenue to bring sports betting to the state's casinos and racetracks with potentially less political exposure," Finan said.

After the [U.S. Supreme Court's rejection](#) [3] of an appeal to the 1992 Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act (PASPA) on June 23, Christie said: "We have to move on."

The [author of the new sports-betting bill](#) [4], Democratic state Senator Ray Lesniak, said he has "no idea" if the governor will sign it.

"I am encouraged that he's taking a serious look at it," Lesniak said Tuesday.

Lesniak and Christie are political enemies but both [strongly support the legalization of sports betting](#) [5] in New Jersey.

Shortly after the legislature passed Lesniak's bill on the June 26, the senator tweeted the governor: "Assembly & Senate pass my sports betting bill. Ball's in your court."

On Tuesday, Lesniak denied he was trying to pressure the governor.

"I was just saying I've done my job," Lesniak told GamblingCompliance.

Christopher Soriano, a gaming attorney with law firm Duane Morris in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, said he anticipates the [nation's major sports leagues](#) [6] will argue the new bill is simply an end run around PASPA, the federal law banning legal sports betting in most states.

However, Soriano noted that the leagues have acknowledged that PASPA "only prohibits a state from authorizing or regulating sports wagering and does not in and of itself prohibit sports wagering."

"Thus, it is difficult to predict the outcome of such a case if it is brought, but the state [of New Jersey] seems to have a strong argument," Soriano said.

Daniel L. Wallach, a gaming attorney in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, said the new bill would violate [PASPA](#) [7] as it prohibits states from even indirectly authorizing or promoting sports wagering.

"This certainly appears to be an indirect or back-door authorization of sports betting," Wallach said.

Ryan Rodenberg, an assistant professor of sports law analytics at Florida State University who

submitted a brief to the Supreme Court supporting New Jersey's appeal, said he has never seen a state overturn its own law restricting sports bets.

"I have never come across a 'repeal' of the type here. As such, it may be unprecedented," Rodenberg said.

Brian Gallini, a law professor at the University of Arkansas, said Lesniak's introduction of the bill on the same day the Supreme Court rejected a hearing on sports betting falls under the heading of "something's better than nothing."

"I'm less confident about a bill that so quickly reacts ... by repealing 'all prohibitions' against sports betting. Surely, that facet of the bill is short sighted," Gallini said.



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