

# Ohio Legislature Making Progress On Sports Betting

19 November 2020 3 minute read Matt Carey

---

Ohio Senate committee hears brief update on sports-betting bill

---

Latest bill draft reduces online skins per casino from three to two

---

Operators lobby to include language to allow more bet types

---

During a short Senate committee hearing on Wednesday, sponsors of a plan to legalize sports betting in Ohio say progress is still being made toward passing a bill by the end of the year.

**Senate Bill 111** received a third hearing from the Ohio Senate General Government and Agency Review Committee, and the bill's primary sponsors, Senators John Eklund and Sean O'Brien, said more information will soon follow after seven months of negotiations since the bill was last heard in the Senate.

"The input we have received from the advocates from all corners has been ... excellent, and constructive," Eklund said.

"We have been listening and formulating refinements, I will call them, to help make this bill, in so far as it finds favor with the committee, the model, the paradigm for this type of legislation in the United States of America.

"We are well on our way to doing that," Eklund continued. "We will be hopefully in a position ... in the not too distant future to make a report as to the fruits of those labors, and I believe you'll find those fruits to be quite sweet and firm."

The most recent draft of the bill, released in late October, reduced the number of potential online skins available to each of the state's four land-based casinos and seven racinos from **three** to two.

The bill also keeps the Ohio Casino Control Commission (OCCC) as the regulator, a topic that had been one of the biggest points of contention between Senate and House leaders for much of the last year.

In comments submitted as part of Wednesday's hearing, representatives from six operators, as well as trade group iDEA Growth, expressed support for the bill.

However, several suggested changes to the language regarding skins, including potentially allowing more skins, as well as clarifying language regarding potential branding restrictions.

"Without clarification, the language could be interpreted to limit the market even more, and would disproportionately impact gaming operators that own more than one property," iDEA wrote in comments.

"We urge lawmakers to address this confusion and clearly articulate that each sports gaming entity can offer multiple online brands (up to three), regardless of the brand they operate at their land-based casino or racino."

Operators also pushed for an expanded definition of "sporting event" that would allow for more regulator discretion as to the types of bets allowed.

"Gaming regulators have deep expertise governing bets and wagers, including by deciding what types of bets or wagers a gaming operator may offer," wrote Rick Limardo, vice president of government affairs for MGM Resorts International.

"This is true in poker or blackjack, and should be true for sports wagering, as well," Limardo said.

Several companies, including FanDuel and DraftKings, lobbied for the inclusion of wagering on esports and potential amateur sporting events approved by regulators.

“Broadening this definition but still requiring regulatory approval to offer wagering on these events will provide the OCCC flexibility and allow operators to innovate and compete with the illegal market which faces no restrictions on the types of wagers accepted or which sporting events ... on which wagers may be offered,” FanDuel and DraftKings wrote in its comments.

Others to comment included JACK Entertainment, Penn National Gaming and Boyd Gaming, which all operate land-based properties in Ohio.

The Senate has sessions scheduled through December 22 before lawmakers are set to adjourn the two-year session.

Three of the four key sponsors of sports-betting bills in the state, including both Senate sponsors and one House sponsor, are set to leave the legislature at the end of the year due to failed re-election bids or term limits, adding an extra impetus to get a package across the finish line by year’s end.

**Rate this article** 

