

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2016 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 930
Ways and Means

(Delegate Luedtke)

Fantasy Competitions - Regulatory Authority

This bill transfers the authority to adopt regulations relating to fantasy competitions from the Comptroller to the Director of the Lottery and Gaming Control Agency.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2016.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The State Lottery and Gaming Control Agency can adopt regulations with existing resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law/Background: Chapter 346 of 2012 exempts a specified “fantasy competition” from prohibitions against betting, wagering, and gambling in State law. The law defines “fantasy competition” as any online fantasy or simulated game or contest such as fantasy sports in which (1) participants own, manage, or coach imaginary teams; (2) all prizes and awards offered to winning participants are established and made known to participants in advance of the game or contest; and (3) the winning outcome of the game or contest reflects the relative skill of the participants and is determined by statistics generated by actual individuals. The Comptroller is authorized to adopt regulations to limit fantasy sport competitions.

Only two states, Maryland and Montana, expressly address fantasy sports in statute. The Montana law authorizes fantasy sports leagues but prohibits online wagering on fantasy sports leagues.

Daily fantasy sports is a new form of gaming in which participants' fantasy teams compete against each other based on professional player or team statistics. Daily fantasy sports operates on a shorter time table than traditional fantasy sports competitions. With daily fantasy sports competitions players usually draft a team for a day or a week. Fantasy sports have not been challenged under the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act or the Wire Act because generally the activity has not been viewed as a game of chance or gambling. In addition, the Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act includes an exemption for fantasy sports if (1) the value of prizes is not dependent on the number of players; (2) the outcome is determined by fantasy player skill and knowledge; and (3) the outcome cannot be determined by the score of the game or based solely on one individual player's performance. This exemption does not preempt state law and daily fantasy sports competitions must still comply with each state's particular prohibitions on gambling and private lotteries.

While daily fantasy sport competitions are widely advertised across the country, the competitions have ceased in some states where regulators, court decisions, or attorneys general have raised questions about their legality. Most recently, the Nevada Gaming Control Board concluded that daily fantasy sports meet the definition of a game or gambling because the competitions involve wagering on the collective performance of individuals participating in a sporting event. The board determined that a person must possess a license to operate a sports pool issued by the Nevada Gaming Commission in order to conduct a daily fantasy sports competition.

Recent news coverage identified individuals employed by daily fantasy sports operators that used company data to participate in competitions on rival websites. These news reports have brought additional scrutiny to the industry. It has been widely reported that federal investigators and a grand jury in Florida are investigating whether daily fantasy sports competitions violate federal law. Until there is clear guidance from the federal government, the issue of daily fantasy sports will be left to the states to enforce through state gaming laws.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Comptroller's Office, Maryland State Lottery and Gaming Control Agency, Department of Legislative Services

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