

# Murphy to place first sports bet after signing law Monday

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Gov. Phil Murphy said he will place the first legal sports bet in New Jersey after signing legislation Monday to regulate and tax sports wagering at Atlantic City casinos and the state's racetracks.

"Today, we're finally making the dream of legalized sports betting a reality for New Jersey," Murphy said. "This is the right move for New Jersey, and it will strengthen our economy."

Murphy plans to place the first bet Thursday morning at Monmouth Park Racetrack in Oceanport. It was unclear when or where the first bet at an Atlantic City casino will be placed.

The governor is scheduled to be in Atlantic City on Tuesday at Harrah's Waterfront Conference Center, where he will speak at the New Jersey AFL-CIO convention. He is also scheduled to be the keynote speaker Thursday at the East Coast Gaming Congress at Harrah's.

The new law allows a licensed casino or racetrack to accept bets at a sports-wagering lounge. Casinos and racetracks can petition to operate a sports pool at a temporary facility during the construction of such a lounge. Online sports betting will be available in 30 days.

In Atlantic City, there are already signs that sports betting will be available to casino guests in the very near future. At Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa, the property is renaming its Racebook the Race & Sports Book, and a sign at the front states smoking will be prohibited beginning June 18.

"We are moving ahead with all possible speed to begin accepting legal sports bets as soon as required regulatory approvals are in place," MGM Resorts International, parent company of Borgata, said in a statement.

The internet gaming room at Resorts Casino Hotel will be the site of sports betting for the 40-year-old property. Resorts announced a partnership with fantasy sports operator DraftKings for its online sports book earlier this month.

Golden Nugget Atlantic City said it plans to offer sports betting at the casino and online by the start of the NFL season.

Ocean Resort Casino will be partnering with international sports book operator William Hill for a 7,500-square-foot lounge in the center of the casino floor.

Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City declined comment Monday. Hard Rock has a confidential stadium naming rights deal with the NFL and the Miami Dolphins that Jim Allen, chairman of Hard Rock International, said contained "certain restrictions" when asked about offering sports betting during a casino license hearing in May.

Both Hard Rock and Ocean Resort are scheduled to open June 28.

The state Senate and Assembly unanimously approved the legislation June 7. The bill's passage followed a nearly four-year legal battle with five major sports leagues that challenged New Jersey's efforts to legalize sports gambling all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. On May 14, the court found the 1992 federal ban on sports betting to be unconstitutional.

New Jersey spent more than \$8.7 million on legal fees fighting the NFL, NBA, MLB, NHL and NCAA.

Sports betting will be available to individuals 21 or older. The bill prohibits athletes, coaches, referees and other people with potential influence or access to nonpublic information regarding sporting events from placing bets on sporting events overseen by the league in which they participate. Additionally, wagers cannot be placed on high school sporting events or collegiate athletic events taking place in New Jersey or involving New Jersey teams.

The new law authorizes the state Division of Gaming Enforcement and the New Jersey Racing Commission to issue emergency regulations for a period of up to 270 days to govern sports betting. These regulations are to allow already-licensed casinos and racetracks to apply for a transactional waiver that will enable them to commence sports betting.

The DGE declined to comment Monday.

The estimated state tax revenues that could be generated from sports betting are projected at about \$13 million in the first full year of operation, according to the Governor's Office.

"We led the fight for sports betting, and it is now happening," said Senate President Steve Sweeney, D-Salem, Gloucester, Cumberland. "We overcame multiple legal obstacles and withstood the determined efforts of opponents with a decisive victory in the Supreme Court. ... Our efforts will pay off."

*Staff Writers Michelle Brunetti Post and Vincent Jackson contributed to this report.*