

Getting Iowa sports betting up and running hinges on key dates next week and the week after

- [By Steve Liewer / World-Herald staff writer](#)

- Jun 27, 2019 Updated 43 min ago

Iowa casinos are moving ahead briskly to establish new rules for sports betting in hopes of having legal wagering in place in time for football season.

The Iowa Racing and Gaming Commission expects to publish draft regulations on its [website](#) early next week, said Brian Ohorilko, the group's administrator. If that happens on schedule, the commission plans to hold a public hearing on the regulations at its next regular meeting, July 11, at Prairie Meadows Racetrack and Casino in Altoona.

The commission also has scheduled a special meeting for July 30 that will be dedicated entirely to sports-betting business — to include reviewing and commenting on rules, and approval of licenses or contracts connected to sports betting, Ohorilko said.

"They've set a good timeline for allowing this to happen in time for football season," said Brendan Bussmann, a former Nebraskan who now is a partner in Las Vegas-based gambling and entertainment consultant Global Market

Advisors. "Iowa has been one of the better examples of people diligently working through the regulatory process."

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Nebraska residents will be able to place bets at Iowa casinos using an online sports-betting app. However, they will have to travel to an Iowa casino to set up an account in person. And bettors will only be able to place wagers while they are inside Iowa's borders.

Bussmann, former director of football operations at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, thinks fans from this side of the river won't find that to be much of a barrier.

"The casino operations in Council Bluffs are going to make a killing," he said.

Sports betting became legal after a U.S. Supreme Court decision in May 2018, overturning a federal law that restricted states from permitting the practice except for Nevada, which had allowed gambling for decades.

Six more states plus the District of Columbia legalized the practice last year. Now the total with legal sportsbooks is 16, Bussmann said.

Ohorilko said several Iowa casinos already have signed contracts with companies to manage their sports books, or for remodeling to existing facilities. Though each is setting up its own program, he expects all 19 state-regulated casinos to accommodate sports bets before football season.

[Shatel: With sports betting possibly coming to Iowa, casinos are going all in](#)

Legislators in Nebraska have taken no action to legalize sports betting. Gov. Pete Ricketts and other political leaders in the state have opposed any

expansion of gambling, citing the social ills caused by compulsive gambling. Previous attempts to amend the state constitution to allow casino gambling have failed.

Bussmann said he believes sports betting would be more popular because Nebraskans are passionate about sports. He said there is almost certainly a large amount of underground wagering.

"Nebraska has sports betting today," he said. "It's just not legal."

He'd like to see his home state try a referendum on sports gambling.

"I don't think culturally it's anything that people find taboo anymore," he said.

"Take it to a vote. See what the people want to do."