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Casino fined \$800K for marketing to banned gamblers

By: [Bob Tita](#) May 19, 2008

(Crain's) — The [Illinois Gaming Board](#) on Monday fined Hollywood Casino in Aurora \$800,000 and suspended three managers for sending promotional materials to problem gamblers who asked to be banned from casinos in the state.

It's the largest fine the board has ever levied for such an infraction.

As part of a campaign to develop new customers, the casino rented a list of names from a firm that operates ATM machines at Illinois casinos. In January, the casino mailed promotional materials, including coupons to use at Hollywood Casino, to nearly 15,900 people identified as prospective customers.

However, the casino's marketing department failed to check the list against the names of people enrolled in the Gaming Board's Self-Exclusion Program. The board said 146 people in the program received the mailing.

Penn National Gaming Inc., the owner of Hollywood Casino, did not immediately return calls seeking comment.

Hollywood's \$800,000 fine is the largest penalty to date levied against an Illinois casino for infractions involving the self-exclusion program. In 2005, Empress Casino in Joliet was fined \$600,000 for allowing promotional materials to be mailed to people enrolled in the program. In that case, Empress failed to enter the names of enrollees in the casino's marketing database.

The voluntary program allows problem gamblers to cut off their access to state casinos. The exclusion includes promotional materials intended to entice customers to visit.

The suspensions, announced at Monday's board meeting, were for three Hollywood managers: General Manager G. Patt Medchill, whose license was suspended for three days; head of external marketing Christopher Rellinger, for 14 days, and Vice-president of Marketing Alan Rosenzweig, 10 days. Casino employees cannot work without a state license.