

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2078565/Obama-condemned-rewriting-online-gambling-rules--announcing-Christmas-notices.html#ixzz1hfE7nwhj>

Obama condemned for rewriting online gambling rules - and announcing it at Christmas so no one notices

By [Daily Mail Reporter](#) (UK)

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A move by the government that clears the way for the legalisation of online poker and other gambling has been condemned as 'outrageous'.

A Justice Department opinion dated September - but only made public on Friday - reinterprets a decades-old policy which saw civil and criminal charges against operators of some of the most popular online poker sites.

It is a switch that could spur web-based gambling - and which critics fear will only deepen families' spiraling debts.

'I think the notion that the government - during these economic times - is working even harder to increase personal debt goes against the very purpose of what government is supposed to do,' Les Bernal, executive director of Stop Predatory Gambling, told MailOnline.

'Every home, dorm room and office in the country has a internet connection. Why is the government actively pushing for them to be able to gamble?'

He added that the timing was particularly troubling, especially as the department appears to have been sitting on the opinion for months.

'What is outrageous is how they released [the opinion] on the eve of Christmas Eve,' Mr Bernal of the Washington-based group added. 'They now how severe the implications are, but they have tried to bury it.'

'Who is fighting for the lottery class if it is the Department of Justice is coming up with these decisions?'

The Wire Act of 1961 barred gambling over telecommunications that crossed state lines or international borders - thus including online wagers.

But now the Justice Department has claimed the Act applies only to bets on a 'sporting event or contest'.

The reinterpretation means a state's use of the Internet to sell lottery tickets to adults within its borders or abroad is permitted.

'The United States Department of Justice has given the online gaming community a big, big present,' said I. Nelson Rose, a gaming law expert at Whittier Law School.

'What is outrageous is how they released the opinion on the eve of Christmas Eve. They know how severe the implications are, but they have tried to bury it'

Les Bernal, Stop Predatory Gambling

The department's conclusion would eliminate 'almost every federal anti-gambling law that could apply to gaming that is legal under state laws,' Rose wrote on his www.gamblingandthelaw.com blog.

If a state legalized intra-state games such as poker, 'there is simply no federal law that could apply' against their operators, he said.

The department's opinion, written by Assistant Attorney General Virginia Seitz, said the law's legislative history showed Congress's overriding goal had been to halt wire communications for sports gambling.

Congress had been concerned about rapid transmission of betting information on horse racing, baseball, basketball, football and boxing, she said.

'The ordinary meaning of the phrase "sporting event or contest" does not encompass lotteries,' Seitz wrote.

'Accordingly, we conclude that the proposed lotteries are not within the prohibitions of the Wire Act.'

The global online gambling industry grew 12 percent last year to as much as \$30 billion, according to a survey in March by Global Betting and Gaming Consultancy, based on the Isle of Man, where online gambling is legal.