

A Good Bet

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The Post's May 15 editorial, "The bad odds of legalized sports betting," should have done more to describe the sports betting landscape in the United States before 2018, when the Supreme Court cleared the way for 38 states and D.C. to create legal, regulated markets.

Before 2018, Americans bet an estimated \$150 billion annually through black market bookies and rogue offshore websites. These shady operators contributed nothing in tax revenue, invested nothing in responsible gaming programs and offered zero protections for consumer or competition integrity.

Though the promise of capturing tax revenue being lost to the black market surely appealed to many states, a primary motivation in legalizing sports betting was to shut down an illegal market that drained law enforcement resources, took advantage of consumers and funneled money to criminal enterprises. That bet is paying off.

Today, research conducted by the American Gaming Association suggests that an estimated 77 percent of online sports bets are made legally, up from 44 percent in 2019. Seventy-eight percent of bettors rely on regulated gambling operators. And the illegal market has shrunk dramatically from \$150 billion to \$64 billion. Legal sports betting has enabled customers to transition from predatory operators to regulated markets where taxes are paid, responsible betting tools are ubiquitous, payouts on winning wagers are guaranteed and help is available for those who need it.

The industry is committed to helping people play responsibly, and we welcome the increased attention sports betting's expansion has brought to the conversation around problem gambling. In fact, because of the tax revenue generated by legal gaming, problem gambling programs are better funded than ever. In 2022, \$96 million was earmarked for state problem gambling programs, with nearly every dollar coming from legal gaming taxes.

When we ignore the illegal market, we ignore reality. And we also ignore opportunities to build safer markets for consumers by eroding the illegal market further through competitive, legal alternatives.

Legal sports betting is still in its early days, and we will continue to evolve to enhance entertainment for fans, generate tax revenue for states and promote responsible gambling. That's progress to be celebrated, not condemned.