

POKER VOTERS *of* AMERICA

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California Intrastate Online Poker Legalization Bill To Be Strengthened, Reintroduced in January

“Enormous progress this year” in California means foundation set for success in 2009 says *Poker Voters of America*

After a run of legislative successes at the committee level, the California Gambling Control / Intrastate Online Poker Legalization Act, AB 2026, has been put on the inactive legislative file by its author Assemblyman Lloyd Levine (D-Van Nuys) at the request of the bill’s citizen sponsors, *Poker Voters of America*. “We just ran out of time for the current legislative session,” said Jim Tabilio, President of *Poker Voters*.

Tabilio announced that the bill will be introduced in the new legislative session in January 2009 in a stronger form, with a bi-partisan group of new co-authors in the Assembly and Senate. The strengthened version of the bill will be titled the *California Online Poker Law Enforcement and Consumer Safety Act* and will be assigned a new bill number in January.

Tabilio said this year’s effort to pass the initial online intrastate poker legalization bill, AB 2026, represented significant political success on the issue. “A year ago, no one was even thinking about an intrastate online poker system. Since then, AB 2026 was approved by two Assembly committees, passed the full Assembly, was then approved by two Senate committees and went to the floor of the State Senate. Then we just ran out of time to make necessary changes.” Tabilio noted that the California budget crisis and stalemate in August absorbed so much time and attention of legislators that it was almost impossible to focus necessary attention on AB 2026, incorporate final amendments and insure its passage.

“We made an enormous amount of progress this year, and could likely have passed an amended version of the bill in August. But rather than rush the drafting of amendments just to beat the legislative deadline, we decided to wait for a better spot to get all our chips in,” said Tabilio.

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Tabilio noted that the success of this year's legislative effort has created political momentum for moving the bill forward quickly in 2009. "When we first introduced the online intrastate poker legalization bill in February 2008, there were many questions from potential stakeholders, regulators and legislators. They wanted to know how the system could work, what kind of revenue the state could expect and whether it was even possible under federal law. *Poker Voters* and Assemblyman Levine were able to answer those questions and educate all the parties, while raising awareness in the Legislature as a whole about the revenue potential of legalized intrastate online poker.

"The questions we're hearing most often now are about the mechanics of making this happen and how quickly the system can start generating revenue for the state," said Tabilio.

In an effort to help answer those pragmatic questions, *Poker Voters* has announced plans to sponsor a session to bring stakeholders, regulators, staff and legislators together with experts in all aspects of legal online poker operations at a mid-October conference in California. "We're inviting a full range of stakeholders to join *Poker Voters* in sponsoring this event," said Tabilio, "so we can brief legislators and regulators on the technological, legal, fiscal and mechanical requirements necessary to build a legal intrastate online poker system in California."

Tabilio said the goal is clear. "We want to provide enough detailed information so stakeholders -- including Native American tribes and licensed card clubs in California -- can work in cooperation with *Poker Voters* to craft specific legislation that will provide the best path to build a system that quickly generates income for operators and revenue for the state."

One final practical issue Tabilio noted was that California decision-makers and stakeholders now understand that being the first state to implement an intrastate online poker system is important. "It means potentially billions of additional revenue for the state that takes the lead and the operators in that state. They get it," said Tabilio. "They know that other states have been watching the California effort and are now assessing how they can set up their own systems and can jump in quickly. There's no magic to it: being first is better -- and more lucrative -- than being tenth."

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