

New bill would allow online casinos by tightening UIGEA

Once again, legislation has been introduced before the US Congress seeking to manage the usage of the UIGEA while mitigating the harmful effects. Republican Pete Sessions has composed a measure designed to remove the vagaries of the UIGEA, as well as specify exactly what illegal conduct is targeted.

Sessions' bill acknowledges the confusion and disarray caused by the UIGEA. It also states the conflicting and outdated nature of American laws concerning gambling.

Therefore, the bill basically gives amnesty to any online gambling operations for activities prior to the passage of the UIGEA in 2006, which would be a relief to those legitimate casinos that closed U.S. operations after the UIGEA cleared, but are still being pursued and hunted by the U.S. Department of Justice.

The language of the bill then notes that all precedents in prosecution and court cases revolve around sports gambling, and asserts that there is a special need to protect the integrity of pro and amateur sports.

Sessions then suggests that the only online wagers or gambling sites that would be prosecutable would be either those accepting sports gambling, or those found to be laundering money for other illegal activity, such as terrorism or drug dealing.

Surprisingly, the reception of the bill has been lukewarm at best. Obviously, sports gamblers feel they have been made the scapegoat, and sports betting sites will not willingly accept being singled out.

Still, the Poker Players Alliance has also been cautious about the bill. Even though under Sessions' proposal online poker would not be a federal violation, the stance of the Alliance is that poker is already legal, and thus does not need the special legislation to protect it.

Sherman Bradley, expert gaming analyst at OCA, stated, „While the bill is far from perfect, it goes a long way, recognizing the legitimacy and transparency of online gambling operators such as those registered on the London Stock Exchange.

„While bookmakers would have a valid gripe about being singled out, there is certainly in Congress a desire, however naive, to keep the illusion that sports are shielded from gaming influences by laws.

„Poker players may want to quibble over wording, but this bill would allow online casinos and poker rooms to operate without fear in the U.S. from the hammer of the UIGEA. „There is a good chance that the online casino industry will need to compromise to achieve legitimacy in the U.S., and this bill grants much of what has been sought.“