

Public Law 95-515  
95th Congress

An Act

To regulate interstate commerce with respect to parimutuel wagering on horseracing, to maintain the stability of the horseracing industry, and for other purposes.

Oct. 25, 1978

[S. 1185]

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled*, This Act may be cited as the "Interstate Horseracing Act of 1978".

Interstate  
Horseracing Act  
of 1978.

15 USC 3001  
note.

15 USC 3001.

FINDINGS AND POLICY

SEC. 2. (a) The Congress finds that—

(1) the States should have the primary responsibility for determining what forms of gambling may legally take place within their borders;

(2) the Federal Government should prevent interference by one State with the gambling policies of another, and should act to protect identifiable national interests; and

(3) in the limited area of interstate off-track wagering on horse-races, there is a need for Federal action to ensure States will continue to cooperate with one another in the acceptance of legal interstate wagers.

(b) It is the policy of the Congress in this Act to regulate interstate commerce with respect to wagering on horseracing, in order to further the horseracing and legal off-track betting industries in the United States.

DEFINITIONS

SEC. 3. For the purposes of this Act the term—

15 USC 3002.

(1) "person" means any individual, association, partnership, joint venture, corporation, State or political subdivision thereof, department, agency, or instrumentality of a State or political subdivision thereof, or any other organization or entity;

(2) "State" means each State of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and any territory or possession of the United States;

(3) "interstate off-track wager" means a legal wager placed or accepted in one State with respect to the outcome of a horserace taking place in another State;

(4) "on-track wager" means a wager with respect to the outcome of a horserace which is placed at the racetrack at which such horserace takes place;

(5) "host State" means the State in which the horserace subject to the interstate wager takes place;

(6) "off-track State" means the State in which an interstate off-track wager is accepted;

(7) "off-track betting system" means any group which is in the business of accepting wagers on horseraces at locations other than the place where the horserace is run, which business is conducted by the State or licensed or otherwise permitted by State law;

(8) "off-track betting office" means any location within an off-track State at which off-track wagers are accepted;

(9) "host racing association" means any person who, pursuant to a license or other permission granted by the host State, conducts the horserace subject to the interstate wager;

(10) "host racing commission" means that person designated by State statute or, in the absence of statute, by regulation, with jurisdiction to regulate the conduct of racing within the host State;

(11) "off-track racing commission" means that person designated by State statute or, in the absence of statute, by regulation, with jurisdiction to regulate off-track betting in that State;

(12) "horsemen's group" means, with reference to the applicable host racing association, the group which represents the majority of owners and trainers racing there, for the races subject to the interstate off-track wager on any racing day;

(13) "parimutuel" means any system whereby wagers with respect to the outcome of a horserace are placed with, or in, a wagering pool conducted by a person licensed or otherwise permitted to do so under State law, and in which the participants are wagering with each other and not against the operator;

(14) "currently operating tracks" means racing associations conducting parimutuel horseracing at the same time of day (afternoon against afternoon; nighttime against nighttime) as the racing association conducting the horseracing which is the subject of the interstate off-track wager;

(15) "race meeting" means those scheduled days during the year a racing association is granted permission by the appropriate State racing commission to conduct horseracing;

(16) "racing day" means a full program of races at a specified racing association on a specified day;

(17) "special event" means the specific individual horserace which is deemed by the off-track betting system to be of sufficient national significance and interest to warrant interstate off-track wagering on that event or events;

(18) "dark days" means those days when racing of the same type does not occur in an off-track State within 60 miles of an off-track betting office during a race meeting, including, but not limited to, a dark weekday when such racing association or associations run on Sunday, and days when a racing program is scheduled but does not take place, or cannot be completed due to weather, strikes and other factors not within the control of the off-track betting system;

(19) "year" means calendar year;

(20) "takeout" means that portion of a wager which is deducted from or not included in the parimutuel pool, and which is distributed to persons other than those placing wagers;

(21) "regular contractual process" means those negotiations by which the applicable horsemen's group and host racing association reach agreements on issues regarding the conduct of horseracing by the horsemen's group at that racing association;

(22) "terms and conditions" includes, but is not limited to, the percentage which is paid by the off-track betting system to the host racing association, the percentage which is paid by the host racing association to the horsemen's group, as well as any arrangements as to the exclusivity between the host racing association and the off-track betting system.

## PROHIBITION

SEC. 4. No person may accept an interstate off-track wager except as provided in this Act. 15 USC 3003.

## REGULATION

SEC. 5. (a) An interstate off-track wager may be accepted by an off-track betting system only if consent is obtained from— 15 USC 3004.

(1) the host racing association, except that—

(A) as a condition precedent to such consent, said racing association (except a not-for-profit racing association in a State where the distribution of off-track betting revenues in that State is set forth by law) must have a written agreement with the horsemen's group, under which said racing association may give such consent, setting forth the terms and conditions relating thereto; provided,

(B) that where the host racing association has a contract with a horsemen's group at the time of enactment of this Act which contains no provisions referring to interstate off-track betting, the terms and conditions of said then-existing contract shall be deemed to apply to the interstate off-track wagers and no additional written agreement need be entered into unless the parties to such then-existing contract agree otherwise. Where such provisions exist in such existing contract, such contract shall govern. Where written consents exist at the time of enactment of this Act between an off-track betting system and the host racing association providing for interstate off-track wagers, or such written consents are executed by these parties prior to the expiration of such then-existing contract, upon the expiration of such then-existing contract the written agreement of such horsemen's group shall thereafter be required as such condition precedent and as a part of the regular contractual process, and may not be withdrawn or varied except in the regular contractual process. Where no such written consent exists, and where such written agreement occurs at a racing association which has a regular contractual process with such horsemen's group, said agreement by the horsemen's group may not be withdrawn or varied except in the regular contractual process:

(2) the host racing commission;

(3) the off-track racing commission.

(b)(1) In addition to the requirement of subsection (a), any off-track betting office shall obtain the approval of—

(A) all currently operating tracks within 60 miles of such off-track betting office; and

(B) if there are no currently operating tracks within 60 miles then the closest currently operating track in an adjoining State.

(2) Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (1) of this subsection, any off-track betting office in a State with at least 250 days of on-track parimutuel horseracing a year, may accept interstate off-track wagers for a total of 60 racing days and 25 special events a year without the approval required by paragraph (1), if with respect to such 60 racing days, there is no racing of the same type at the same time of day being conducted within the off-track betting State within 60 miles of the off-track betting office accepting the wager, or such racing pro-

gram cannot be completed. Excluded from such 60 days and from the consent required by subsection (b)(1) may be dark days which occur during a regularly scheduled race meeting in said off-track betting State. In order to accept any interstate off-track wager under the terms of the preceding sentence the off-track betting office shall make identical offers to any racing association described in subparagraph (A) of subsection (b)(1). Nothing in this subparagraph shall be construed to reduce or eliminate the necessity of obtaining all the approvals required by subsection (a).

(c) No parimutuel off-track betting system may employ a takeout for an interstate wager which is greater than the takeout for corresponding wagering pools of off-track wagers on races run within the off-track State except where such greater takeout is authorized by State law in the off-track State.

#### LIABILITY AND DAMAGES

15 USC 3005.

SEC. 6. Any person accepting any interstate off-track wager in violation of this Act shall be civilly liable for damages to the host State, the host racing association and the horsemen's group. Damages for each violation shall be based on the total of off-track wagers as follows:

(1) If the interstate off-track wager was of a type accepted at the host racing association, damages shall be in an amount equal to that portion of the takeout which would have been distributed to the host State, host racing association and the horsemen's group, as if each such interstate off-track wager had been placed at the host racing association.

(2) If such interstate off-track wager was of a type not accepted at the host racing association, the amount of damages shall be determined at the rate of takeout prevailing at the off-track betting system for that type of wager and shall be distributed according to the same formulas as in paragraph (1) above.

#### CIVIL ACTION

15 USC 3006.

SEC. 7. (a) The host State, the host racing association, or the horsemen's group may commence a civil action against any person alleged to be in violation of this Act, for injunctive relief to restrain violations and for damages in accordance with section 6.

(b) In any civil action under this section, the host State, the host racing association and horsemen's group, if not a party, shall be permitted to intervene as a matter of right.

(c) A civil action may not be commenced pursuant to this section more than 3 years after the discovery of the alleged violation upon which such civil action is based.

(d) Nothing in this Act shall be construed to permit a State to be sued under this section other than in accordance with its applicable laws.

#### JURISDICTION AND VENUE

15 USC 3007.

SEC. 8. (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the district courts of the United States shall have jurisdiction over any civil action under this Act, without regard to the citizenship of the parties or the amount in controversy.

(b) A civil action under this Act may be brought in any district court of the United States for a district located in the host State or the off-track State, and all process in any such civil action may be served in any judicial district of the United States.

(c) The jurisdiction of the district courts of the United States pursuant to this section shall be concurrent with that of any State court of competent jurisdiction located in the host State or the off-track State.

**EFFECTIVE DATE; APPLICABILITY**

SEC. 9. (a) The provisions of this Act shall take effect on the date of enactment of this Act, and, except as provided in subsection (b) of this section, shall apply to any interstate off-track wager accepted on or after such date of enactment. 15 USC 3001 note.

(b) (1) The provisions of this Act shall not apply to any interstate off-track wager which is accepted pursuant to a contract existing on May 1, 1978.

(2) The provisions of this Act shall not apply to any form of legal non-parimutuel off-track betting existing in a State on May 1, 1978.

(3) The provisions of subsection (b) of section 5 of this Act shall not apply to any parimutuel off-track betting system existing on May 1, 1978, in a State which does not conduct parimutuel horseracing on the date of enactment of this Act.

Approved October 25, 1978.

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**LEGISLATIVE HISTORY:**

HOUSE REPORT No. 95-1733 (Comm. on Interstate and Foreign Commerce).

SENATE REPORTS: No. 95-554 (Comm. on Commerce, Science, and Transportation) and No. 95-1117 (Comm. on the Judiciary).

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 124 (1978):

Sept. 26, considered and passed Senate.

Oct. 10, H.R. 14089 considered and passed House; passage vacated, and S. 1185 passed in lieu.

**AMENDMENT TO  
THE INTERSTATE HORSERACING ACT OF 1978**

*December, 2000 – 15 USC Section 3002, Par. (3) Pub. L. 106-553  
inserted:*

"and includes pari-mutuel wagers, where lawful in each State involved, placed or transmitted by an individual in one State via telephone or other electronic media and accepted by an off-track betting system in the same or another State, as well as the combination of any pari-mutuel wagering pools" after "another State".

*15 USC, Section 3002, Paragraph (3) now reads:*

(3) "interstate off-track wager" means a legal wager placed or accepted in one State with respect to the outcome of a horserace taking place in another State and includes pari-mutuel wagers, where lawful in each State involved, placed or transmitted by an individual in one State via telephone or other electronic media and accepted by an off-track betting system in the same or another State, as well as the combination of any pari-mutuel wagering pools;