



February 4, 2024

Skill Games Inching Forward At General Assembly

While the path has not been straight, the effort to restore skill games in the Commonwealth is moving forward. Friday, a House of Delegates subcommittee unanimously approved legislation that would legalize skill games. However, the bill also contained several problematic provisions. The House proposes:

- A limit of 2 games per convenience location; 5 for truck stops
- There would have to be local approval either via an ordinance by the governing body or a citizen's referendum.
- The tax would be 30 percent of gross profits per machine.
- Because of the local approvals, the games would not be legal until January 1, 2025.

The Senate has not acted on its version of skill game legislation, but will do so sometime this week. There will be differences between the bills passed in each branch, and the ultimate resolution should emerge in early March after a conference committee of House and Senate members finishes deliberation behind closed doors. Then the governor will have to review what emerges.

One of the unfortunate events this week was the unveiling of a multi-media campaign bankrolled by out of state casinos trashing both our members and skill games (which the casinos seek to rebrand as "neighborhood slots"). We will stick to the high road with a continued message of supporting Virginia based business - undeterred by their scorched earth strategy. You can view their campaign website and unseemly television ad below.

<https://stopneighborhoodslots.com/>

Other Issues

As we have reported, last year's bill to define **jobbers as refiners** and give dealers the right of first refusal to buy stations you own and then tear up existing supply agreements, has evolved into something much different for 2024. This year's legislation ([SB 248](#), [HB392](#)) relates to the rental provisions in an agreement between jobber/distributors and dealers. Every day for the past three weeks we have been involved with negotiations on this bill which will likely be considered in the Senate on Monday and in the House on Thursday. There is no doubt that the efforts of the membership over the past year to educate legislators on this issue have made a difference. We will know just how much early in the week and will keep you updated.

Tobacco Licensing and Revocation

There are two bills (SB 582,HB790) pending that would mandate a license to sell tobacco products along with an annual renewal fee. We have spent our time since educating legislators on the fact that underage sales of tobacco have declined significantly since the 21+ age limit passed in 2019 and that today 88 percent of youth access now comes from social sources- compared to just 12 percent from commercial sources. These bills will also be before committees for consideration this week.