

Iowa's Gaming Industry

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Do you gamble? If you don't, you're in a very small minority. According to the folks at 1-800-BETS-OFF, 88% of Iowans gamble. Taking into account just the adult population, that's over two million gamblers in Iowa. Much of that gambling probably takes place over friendly neighborhood card games. But commercial casinos are also big business in Iowa. This month's *By the Numbers* looks at just how big that casino business is, and at the casinos' financial impact on Iowa counties.

Iowa has 17 commercial casinos in 14 counties. In FY 2009, those casinos are projected to pay over \$7 million in gambling taxes directly to Iowa county governments. According to the counties' FY 2009 budgets, the breakdown for gambling taxes by county is:

- Black Hawk - \$400,000
- Clarke - \$260,000
- Clayton - \$194,000
- Clinton - \$130,000
- Des Moines - \$150,000
- Dubuque - \$558,000
- Lee - \$94,000
- Palo Alto - \$75,000
- Polk - \$900,000
- Pottawattamie - \$2,336,250
- Scott - \$735,000
- Washington - \$380,000
- Woodbury - \$345,000
- Worth - \$514,102

without revenue from the gaming industry. A dedicated portion of gaming tax revenues is divided among those 85 counties and used for charitable grants to qualifying organizations. Last year \$77,000 went to a community foundation in each county, which was then responsible for distributing most of the funds to local charities and retaining the rest to build a permanent endowment. This year each foundation is expected to get \$131,000 to dole out to worthy charities, an increase of nearly 70%.

On a statewide level, the gaming industry paid about \$350 million in various state and local taxes in 2007. That money is used to fund infrastructure projects, the Environment First Fund, Vision Iowa and other economic development programs, just to name a few. Some specific projects funded at least in part from gaming revenues include community attraction and tourism (CAT) grants, funding for libraries through Enrich Iowa, funding for county fairs infrastructure, the Gold Star Museum at Camp Dodge, and funding for optical scan voting systems.

The gaming industry also employs about 7,800 Iowans, and hosts over 23 million visitors each year at convention and hotel facilities. To operate those and other facilities, the gaming industry purchased nearly \$300 million worth of products and services from Iowa-based businesses in 2007, and also purchased over 5 million pounds of beef, pork and poultry combined, along with almost 5 million eggs and nearly 200,000 gallons of milk.

The 85 counties without commercial casinos aren't completely

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