

## News

press release | May 23, 2006

# Urgent News from the WVA&LVLOA

from Patricia Pope

Greetings all,

The May 2006 edition of Play Meter magazine featured an article in the "News Bulletin" section that is of interest to anyone associated with the LVL industry in West Virginia. You are encouraged to please take a minute to read it and read my message that follows.

### **Iowa reverses TouchPlay**

In an extreme about-face, the Iowa Legislature has decided to eliminate the TouchPlay program the Iowa Lottery initiated and adopted as one of its product offerings beginning in July 2005 as part of a five-year plan. The Lottery partnered with the coin machine community to roll out the program. Four manufacturer's games were approved for use and each company was represented by a local coin machine distributor. Amusement operators were licensed to purchase machines for placement in locations.

The program proved to be very successful. Over 6,000 machines were placed in 2,862 locations such as bowling centers, convenience stores, groceries, taverns, and truck stops. Legislators cited concerns of their constituents regarding the number of machines and the look of the machines, the expansion of gambling, and safety, although press reports indicated that locations were happy with the equipment. The machines did not escape the notice of the casino industry in the state. A controversy arose and on March 20, Gov. Tom Vilsack signed a new state law (Senate File 2330) to ban the operation of TouchPlay. All games were to be removed in 45 days!

What happens to participants who entered the program in good faith? Several possibilities are on the table. Bill Wohlers of Redline Vending and President of the Iowa Operators of Music and Amusements (IOMA), explained, "The industry has been involved in negotiations with the Attorney General's office and in fact has arrived at a framework of an agreement that would allow the industry to hopefully heal itself and avoid any potential litigation against the state through an extension of the time in which it would be allowed to operate the equipment, as well as the state foregoing its revenue share during that time period. The Attorney General is supportive of that as well as a certain contingent of legislators." At press time the proposal was languishing in the Senate. A few lawsuits have been filed in the interim.

Wohlers added, "To see the whole thing derailed is disheartening. Because something is successful doesn't mean you should eliminate it. At this juncture the only thing we know is that barring any other action, May 3 at 11:59 p.m. is the effective date for having the machines removed. Needless to say, we are hopeful there will be some sort of action because the industry is in dire straits." An extension of time could go as far as Aug. 31 or Sept. 30 but that has yet to be determined.

The WV Amusement & Limited Video Lottery Operators Association Board of Directors, Executive Director, and various members have already begun laying the groundwork for 2011. We are looking five years ahead and already working to insure the solid future and successful continuation of the [permit holder] operator-run LVL industry in West Virginia.

**Thomas Fittro**  
President

**Anthony "Herk" Sparachane**  
Vice President

**Lee Wesson**  
Treasurer

**Patricia Rouse Pope**  
Executive Director

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Your help is needed to keep our momentum going. All WV licensed LVL operators, retailers, and industry associates, be they law firms, lobbyists, LVL and coin device parts and machine manufacturers, equipment suppliers, pr agencies, or providers of peripheral services are invited to join the association and be a part of the effort to make sure what happened in Iowa doesn't happen in West Virginia!

You are invited and encouraged to become a member now and/or continue your support by sending your dues or contributions today to the address listed below. Dues payments may be made in one payment or installments, should that method be more conducive to your budget.

Operator dues are \$1.00 x no. of permits x 12 months + a \$1500 base fee. Retailer- and Associate-status remains \$250 a year.

Your attention and support is appreciated. The show of strength and unity to our legislators, the WV Lottery Commission, and the citizens of the Mountain State who enjoy legalized gaming, not to mention the return on your investment, will be great and beneficial to all involved.

I will look forward to receiving your dues and putting them to work for you. Please call me if I may answer any questions or be of assistance to you at this time. Thank you all for your time and attention.

Best regards,  
Patricia

**Thomas Fitro**  
President

**Anthony "Herk" Sparachane**  
Vice President

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