

The reels are always spinning in the gambling industry, and "The Double Down" is here every Friday to catch you up on all of the week's biggest news. Sports Handle's "Get a Grip" rounds up everything on the [sports betting](#) side, and US Bets provides the best of the rest: brick-and-mortar happenings, [online casino](#) developments, [poker](#) headlines, and more. So pull up a chair, crunch the numbers, and slide forward another stack of chips.

Heating up in the Heartland

The sports betting expansion trend was bound to plateau. There are only 50 states, after all, and more than two-thirds of them have now legalized some form of sports wagering, so we've reached that point where the ball will mostly be advanced via 3-yard draw plays rather than 50-yard bombs.

And that's why 2023 is shaping up as potentially the year when the focus shifts to online casino expansion.

The opening week of the year saw reports of two "I" states looking at iCasino: [Indiana](#) and [Illinois](#). Both already allow (and collect decent tax money from) online sports betting. Now legislators in both states are reportedly getting more serious about significantly increasing that tax revenue with [online blackjack](#), slots, roulette, and so forth.

In the Hoosier State, this movement is nothing new. The past two years have seen iCasino bills introduced, only to hit brick walls in the Public Policy Committee. Will 2023's efforts go further? That remains to be seen, but [The Lebanon Reporter wrote on Wednesday](#) that Rep. Ethan Manning is expected to introduce legislation with a tax rate between 18-19% and 3.2-3.5% of tax revenue going to problem gaming funds.

The *Reporter* article noted, however, that powerful figures in the Indiana House and Senate have expressed opposition to iCasino legislation.

Neighboring state Illinois is also hearing some online casino rumblings, [The Center Square wrote on Wednesday](#), albeit with far fewer specifics than are coming out of Indiana. With a [population nearly double](#) that of Indiana (12.8 million to 6.9 million), Illinois figures to be the state online casino operators will be more focused on. Illinois would be second in population only to [Pennsylvania](#) — and narrowly at that — among states with iCasino should the Land of Lincoln go that route.

Entering 2023, there are eight states with some form of legal online casino, and it's quite possible the number stays the same entering 2024. There appear to be longshot odds against any state crossing the finish line this year, but you have to start with conversations about it, and there will at least be a lot of those bubbling up this year.

This week on Gamble On ...

Every Thursday, *US Bets* drops a new episode of the [Gamble On podcast](#), and [this week's](#) welcomed Circa Sportsbook Operations Manager Jeff Benson to talk Bills-Bengals cancellation fallout, overblown myths about bookmakers, and why there's no such thing as a free lunch when it comes to so-called "bad beat refunds":

Brick-and-mortar is also a big focus in Illinois

[Illinois Might See A Casino Boom In 2023](#)

The opposite of clearing the air

[Smoking Allowed Again In Two Detroit Casinos](#)

Even bigger bucks in PA?

[PA Gaming Industry Looks This Year To Grow Beyond \\$5.2 Billion Revenue](#)

Now taking requests

[New York Casino Location Board Opens Process For Big Apple Applicants](#)

Meet the new boss(es)

[Hard Rock Casino Names New President, General Manager](#)

Caesars Racebook goes live in ninth state

Will [Caesars](#) win the race for place among gambling operators looking to offer a shared wallet for both sports wagering and [horse betting](#) ?

The Flightline of this competition, [FanDuel](#) , routed the field by [debuting a shared wallet](#) at the end of December. On Thursday, Caesars announced that it had launched its racebook in a ninth state —

[Massachusetts](#)

— that is expected to launch legal sports betting later this month. While there's been no indication that Caesars is on the precipice of offering a shared wallet, it seems to have the most momentum among the also-rans should it choose to pursue that objective.

In addition to Massachusetts, Caesars Racebook is now live in [Florida](#) , Indiana, Kentucky, [Ma](#)
[ryland](#)

, Montana, North Dakota,

[Ohio](#)

, and Oregon.

— *Mike Seely*

December drop in Maryland

Casino revenue was up in December in Maryland. Casino revenue was also down in December in Maryland. It's all a matter of what you're comparing it to.

The state's six casinos generated \$165.2 million in gaming revenue last month, [Maryland Lottery and Gaming reported](#),

an increase of 1.1% over the \$163.4 million in November. But December's haul represented a 4.5% dip from the \$172.9 million Maryland's casinos recorded as gaming revenue in December

2021. The December 2022 revenue produced \$69.7 million in taxes to the state.

Leading the way, as usual, were MGM National Harbor and Live! Casino & Hotel with just shy of \$70 million and \$60 million, respectively, in revenue — down 6.9% and 4.4% compared to the previous December. Two of the six casinos saw increased revenue over the corresponding month in 2021: [Hollywood Casino](#) (up 1.5% to \$7.3 million) and [Ocean Downs Casino](#) (up 7.3% to \$7.2 million).

— *Eric Raskin*

More from around the gaming biz

HORSES JUST OFF THE PACE: U.S. horse betting handle dipped slightly in 2022 [[Daily Racing Form](#)]

LIVING OUT OF A HOTEL ROOM: Showboat rooms to be converted to studio apartments [[The Press of Atlantic City](#)]

THIS AIN'T HIS FIRST RODEO: NFR clown wins nearly \$500K on last day in Las Vegas [[Las Vegas Review-Journal](#)]

DO AS I SAY, NOT AS I DO: Vegas 'life coach' accused of running Ponzi scheme to fund gambling addiction [[KTLA.com](#)]

LONG ISLAND LEAP: As casino rumors swirl, Suffolk OTB launches \$200M expansion of its gaming hotel [[Long Island Business News](#)]

THE RHODE LESS TRAVELED: Bally's completes sale and leaseback of Biloxi, Tiverton casinos to GLPI [[CDC Gaming Reports](#)]

DRIVEN TO GAMBLE: Lebanon officials consider turning former dealership into charitable casino [[WCAX.com](#)]

Image: [Blundell Design](#)

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