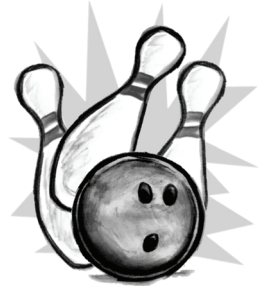




# BCAO of Ohio News



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## BCAO Legislative Gaming Project Q&A By Debbie Juniewicz

The economy is forcing families, businesses and, even, the State of Ohio to make tough choices. One option that has been discussed to help Ohio overcome its growing budget deficit is the potential expansion of the state's gambling industry to permit the use of video lottery terminals (VLTs), commonly referred to as slot machines. Race track owners and casino investors aren't the only business people who are interested in VLT legislation. The Bowling Centers Association of Ohio hired po-

litical consultant Connie Nolder in January to help the organization undertake a grassroots effort to get VLTs in Ohio bowling centers if expanded gaming comes to the state.

Time is of the essence as the state legislature must pass a balanced budget, or file for an extension, by June 30. Nolder, along with BCAO president Linus Hartings and Dayton-area proprietor Joe Poelking, recently answered questions about this timely issue.

**Q:** Gambling initiatives have not had much success in Ohio in recent years. What prompted this most recent effort?

**A:** (Nolder) In January, with the House going democratic, the door was cracked a little bit in regard to the gambling issue. Governors Voinovich and Taft were adamantly opposed to expanded gaming but with the new administration, people were actually willing to look at the issue.

*(continued on page 2)*

## PRESS RELEASE COMING SOON

The BCA of Ohio will issue a Press Release stating our interest in expanded gaming in Ohio after the Senate Finance committee finalizes its' version of the state budget.

While we know not every bowling center supports this legislative effort; the BCAO Board of Directors felt it was important to get involved with this issue as they felt when gaming comes to Ohio, bowling centers should have the opportunity to install VLT's if they so desired.

It is possible that bowling centers around the state might be contacted by the local media. If you do not wish to make a statement, you can direct the media to contact our gaming lobbyist, Connie Nolder, or several of our Ohio proprietors, to make a statement on your behalf. These members have taken a media training course to help them interact with the media.

Patti Rebman-Bellman  
Bob McCracken  
Frank Ruggerie  
Glenn Gable  
Peppe Smith  
Connie Nolder

440-282-6761 Center  
614-561-2823 Cell  
513-520-9080 Cell  
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330-518-4726 Cell  
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## BCAO Legislative Gaming Project Q&A

By Debbie Juniewicz (continued from page 1)

Q: How did the BCAO fit into this issue?

A: (Nolder) If there was a possibility of expanding gambling in Ohio, the proprietors wanted to be a part of it. Bowling centers employ Ohioans and the proprietors are residents of Ohio. They are small local businesses that are integral parts of their communities. If the bowling centers were left out of it, it would negatively affect local businesses and communities across the state.

Q: What is being proposed?

A: (Nolder) Our proposal is for a maximum of 10 VLTs to be permitted in a bowling center in a discreet area. We don't want to change a bowling center into a mini casino so they would be out of the main line of sight, not on the concourse. These are smart, small business owners and they are not going to make choices that are going to hurt their business.

Q: Why is this an important issue for proprietors?

A: (Hartings) Two words – revenue stream. It would definitely be a positive for every center. It could offset the almost nonexistent league play and attract more non-bowler traffic.

A: (Poelking) Cash flow. We'll see more foot traffic, I have no doubt about that. We've all been trying to find different ways to bring people into the business, like Keno, and this is another product we would have

to bring them in. And if we don't promote ourselves first, nobody will.

Q: Is there a downside to VLTs in bowling centers?

A: (Hartings) Not in my opinion. I've heard some concerns from people who didn't know if they would bring their family into a center with VLTs but it will be in a separate, contained area. And, of course, there will be some initial expenses – like licensing, space conversion or addition and the cost of the VLTs to purchase or rent – but it just makes sense. Many centers already have lottery and Keno, this is a perfect fit.

A: (Poelking) For some people, gambling has a negative connotation, so that could be a downside, but I think it's because people aren't informed or only have partial information. Each center may have its issues, some may put in only three or four because of space, some may need to make major modifications to their center and some may not want to jump on the bandwagon at all. But we have the ability to make this work.

Q: What should proprietors do to move this issue forward?

A: (Nolder) The first thing is to contact their state representative or senator and invite them to their center. We're really encouraging them to get their representatives into their center to talk about the issue and then follow-up with them

shortly after. That makes a huge difference. I've lobbied for more than 20 years and meetings back home are 10 times more important than a meeting with me. And start reaching out to their employees and people in the community to build support. If they don't already have one, get a copy of the BCAO toolkit. (The toolkit includes the proposed guidelines for operating VLTs, a list of Ohio elected officials with addresses and phone numbers, sample letters and talking points.)

Q: What if expanded gambling is not a component of the upcoming bill? Where would the BCAO initiative stand?

A: (Nolder) This issue isn't going away. The BCAO hasn't had much of a presence in the statehouse until now, but in the past three months, we have met with more than 50 legislators so we need to continue to educate legislators about our interest. We have made huge strides so we need to do whatever we can to keep us in the game.

### Addresses to Know

Governor Ted Strickland  
77 South High Street,  
30<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Columbus, OH 43215

Ohio Lottery Director  
Michael Dolan  
1100 Resource Drive  
Brooklyn Heights, OH 44131

### The Business of Bowling by the Numbers

25 – The percent of Ohioans who reported bowling at least once last year.

300 – The number of Ohio communities that have bowling centers.

5,000 – Ohio bowling centers employ more than 4,000 people.

250 million – The approximate annual gross revenue of Ohio bowling centers.