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New poll shows majority of Kentuckians support sports betting

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While some state legislators try for the fourth straight year to legalize sports betting in Kentucky, a new poll from Western Kentucky University showed a majority of Kentuckians support wagering on sports.

A total of 690 Kentuckians took part in the poll from Dec. 1-9. With a margin of error of plus or minus 4%, about 73% of those who participated said they support sports betting being legalized in the state.

Support for legalized sports betting was consistent across all party lines, ideologies, demographics and income groups, the poll said.

The poll was conducted by the WKU Department of Political Science's Political Behavior Lab.

The lab's director and professor of political science Joel Turner said the results were conclusive.

"The data basically says Kentuckians overwhelmingly support sports betting by a large majority," he said.

From a partisan standpoint, the poll found 77% of Democrats, 73% of Independents and 70% of Republicans supported sports gambling.

Those numbers were consistent across ideological groups – 82% of liberals, 76% of moderates and 64% of conservatives said they supported legalizing sports betting.

Turner said the group with the closest margin was with evangelicals, but even that subset of individuals polled supported gambling on sports with 58% for and 42% against.

Legalizing sports betting received the support of 76% of male respondents and 71% of female respondents, 81% of respondents from the 18-34 age range and 64% of individuals age 65 and older.



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Sports gambling enjoys its strongest support among those making \$100,000 or more (85%). It also sees significant support among those making between \$50,000 and \$100,000 (73%) and those making less than \$50,000 (72%).

Finally, legalizing sports betting also saw clear support across all educational categories, ranging from a low of 66% among those with a high school diploma or less to a high of 79% among those with a college degree.

Republican Rep. Adam Koenig, R-Erlanger, introduced the new sports betting bill Feb. 28. Koenig also led the previous three attempts at passing the bill, but all three died on the House floor.

The Associated Press reported the bill seeks to legalize most forms of sports wagering and regulate the taxation of all online gambling, including fantasy sports and online poker. Supporters of the previous bills estimated legalizing sports wagering would generate about \$22 million in yearly revenue for the state.

Turner said he was uncertain the bill would make it through the House this year.

“It’s gonna be fairly tight, I would imagine,” he said. “But there are some procedural hurdles that could hold it up. There are some Republican legislators that are holding it up.”

Turner also referenced the possible economic benefits occurring if the bill passes, and he said evidence existed of many Kentuckians leaving to bet on sports in neighboring states.

With the exception of the 40-mile stretch where Missouri borders Kentucky, every other state bordering Kentucky now allows sports betting. Currently, 33 states and Washington, D.C., allow sports wagering.

“That’s money that could be kept here,” Turner said. “Critics would say the downside of this is the morality aspect of it. Betting does come with addictive habits. But casinos and sportsbooks are open about this and always tag a gambling hotline with commercials and ads.”

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