



## California Nations Indian Gaming Association

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# NEWS RELEASE

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### California Nations Indian Gaming Association Urges Assembly GO Committee to use upcoming Hearing as a step in legalizing and regulating online poker

*January 5, 2016, Sacramento, CA* – Steve Stallings, chairman of the California Nations Indian Gaming Association (CNIGA), urged Representative Adam Gray, chairman of the California Assembly Governmental Organization Committee, to use the upcoming January 6 hearing to take the next step in legalizing and regulating online poker in the state.

“We realize there are two other bills dealing with sports betting (AB 1441) and daily fantasy sports (DFS) (AB 1437) sharing the agenda with the I-Poker bill, AB 167. Introduced by Representative Reginald Jones-Sawyer, AB 167 represents one of the last in a series of I-Poker bills, which, unlike AB 1441 and AB 1437, were thoroughly vetted, debated, altered, massaged, and continually passed over with the hope of a political miracle of consensus in the next year,” stated Stallings.

“The regulation of fantasy sports is well intended. However, the state needs to prove it can deal with one online game—I-Poker--before it takes on others.”

Stallings believes the fantasy sports media blitz, followed by an impressive barrage of media coverage of the data leak and charges of insider abuses that led to federal investigations, lawsuits and costly legal challenges, prompted more political interest in protecting California’s sports fantasy players than the state’s online poker fans that are regularly victimized without such high-profile notoriety.

“There have been long standing divisions among the stakeholders, including tribal governments, some of which are members of CNIGA. However, I believe, the Jones-Sawyer bill opens the door to compromises that can finally bring the majority together. We were excruciatingly close last year, and I would like to see CNIGA play a major role in helping to unify the Indian tribes on the key issues that previously divided us and take the lead in supporting a partner bill in the state Senate.

Stallings praises Chairman Gray for his consumer advocacy.

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1-1-1-1 Stallings Urges Action on I-Poker

“At the December GO hearing on sports wagering and fantasy sports, Gray suggested, he wanted the state ‘to lead the way in balancing consumer protection with consumer demand.’

“This is a wise and practical approach. Plus, he can meet this goal by passing I-Poker legislation this year. The goal is reasonable. The Legislature knows the demand is there. They know the play is happening. They also know California online poker players are currently sitting ducks, vulnerable to all manner of schemes to steal their money,” Stallings noted.

“The computer age is here and so is internet gambling, along with its opportunities and dangers. To continue to do nothing exposes the state’s citizens to the type of criminal and backroom activities reminiscent of the prohibition of alcohol in the 1920-’30s. We all know how well that worked.

“Our state needs to join the digital age and meet its responsibilities to make I-Poker safe for those who wish to play it (and are forced to play it illegally, subject to fraudulent off-shore betting sites), and begin to turn some of the ill-gotten gains from the illegal operations into benefits for the state’s tax payers.” Stallings added.

To quote Poker News Daily, “... by far the largest state in the nation with approximately 39 million citizens, the California online poker industry would be the most lucrative in the United States.”

Stallings said that I-Poker, as the first to frame the debate and address the complex issues of online gaming, should not only be first on the committee’s agenda, but one of the first pieces of legislation passed in 2016.

“Practice makes perfect applies here,” he explains. “The exercise of debating and approving I-Poker will prove useful in addressing additional details that arise in the new proposals of introducing sports wagering and licensing and regulating DFS.”

Among the challenges facing AB 1437 and AB 1441, both introduced by Representative Gray, Stallings sees major issues of legality, increased funding and structural re-thinking of California’s applicable regulatory agencies.

“Legalizing fantasy sports also faces potential obstacles with an expected weigh in by the state’s Attorney General on whether to join other attorneys general, like the New York attorney general, whose ruling of the games as illegal closed down fantasy sports operations in that state,” he adds.

CNIGA is the largest association of Indian gaming interests in California. According to Stallings CNIGA will be discussing and closely monitoring AB 1437 and AB 1441, as well as working to find a mutually beneficial consensus among stakeholders on I-Poker legislation.

The California Nations Indian Gaming Association is a non-profit association comprised of federally recognized tribal governments dedicated to the protection of tribal sovereignty and the right of tribes to have gaming on Indian lands. For more information, visit our website at [www.cniga.com](http://www.cniga.com)

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