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## Online Casinos

By Adel Awwad

Casinos rise and fall faster than you can blink an eye. The first casino was opened in 1941 on the

Los Vegas strip; however by 1992 all of those casinos had been demolished to make way for new modern casinos. Online it has been the same evolution with casinos sprouting around every corner of cyberspace. These have come and gone faster than the click of your mouse. But how did this start?

Let's start with Google the internet search engine. Type in online casino and it brings back more than 27 million websites. The sheer volume for the term online casino reflects how many people have vested interests in the gaming industry and how popular online casinos have become. The first online casinos first made their appearance during 1996 and a mere US\$17 million was wagered, compared to US\$3 billion by 2000.

It is estimated today that more than a trillion dollars gets spent online each year with online casinos worldwide. Bear Stearns, a leading worldwide investment banking and securities trading and brokerage firm, estimates that during 2003 more than US\$ 6 billion had been spent on online casinos by US gamblers alone! With the growing adoption of broadband internet this online pool of gamblers increases each year.

With online casinos there has also been the expansion of online advertising to gamblers, which according to the BBC places gambling advertisers as the fifth largest advertisers on the internet. Online casinos make use of two types of software. Those that you can download and install onto your computer and the true online casinos where you gamble on the interface of the online casinos web page. Each party makes their choices of how they wish to interact online. With all this sophisticated software, how do online casinos compare to your average brick and mortar casino? Each has their advantages. In an online casino you can play more than one poker game at a time or even gamble on more than one game at a time. In a normal casino this would not be physically possible. The advantage of any real casino compared to an online casino is that you can always judge the physical reaction of the players around the table.

With an online casino it is impersonal and you would never be able to guess the cards the other person is holding. Online casinos have made great strides in trying to mimic the feel of a real casino in the

fashion of the bricks and mortar casinos. They have flashy web pages and music to lure you to play. Domain names in it self have become a big issue with the purchase of misspelled domain names for online casinos.

A recent dispute with the domain name of Sportsodds springs to mind. This domain name was registered by their competitor to drive traffic to the competitor's webpage's. This ended in a legal dispute. Online casinos are big business judging from the amount of money that gets placed on bets and by the amount of money being spent on it. Where there is big money, there will always be disputes.

Online casinos are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and they are accessible from anywhere in the world. Casinos use to be down the road or in your next big town. That has changed in the 21st century. With the advent of online casinos the casino is now in your home. Better yet, if you are reading this, you are already at the casinos doorstep. What is stopping you from placing your bet at an online casino

today and joining millions of others?

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### **Online Gambling And Legislation**

**By Adel Awwad**

With more than a trillion dollars changing hands around the world on online casinos alone, sooner rather than later legislation will step in to exercise some form of control in the casino industry. Those measures to control casinos and gambling during the early years worked as the casino had a physical location. Today however casinos have moved online with no real physical location. The question arises how legal are these online casinos?

Gambling legislation has not changed much since Congress passed the Wire Act in 1961. The Wire Act states that "Whoever being engaged in the business of betting or wagering knowingly uses a wire communication facility for the transmission in interstate or foreign commerce of bets or wagers or information assisting in the placing of bets or wagers on any sporting event or contest, or for the transmission of a wire communication which entitles the recipient to receive money or credit as a result of bets or wagers, or for information assisting in the placing of bets or wagers, shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than two years, or both." This however only covered sports betting and not casinos. There was also no Internet or Internet casinos during that time.

## Online Casinos

During 1998 both MasterCard and Visa sued Cynthia Haines for money she lost while gambling on an online casino. She had lost more than US\$70,000 to an online casino and could not settle her account with the plaintiffs. She filed a counterclaim well within the state laws of California which prohibited credit card loans for gambling be it online casinos or bricks and mortar casinos. That case was settled out of court. Many states have now enacted their own legislation however casinos have moved their gambling operations off shore to casino friendly countries.

Gambling has increased drastically with the advent of the Internet and online casinos. With huge profits and vested interest in casinos there are also very strong lobbyists in government to keep gambling unimpeded. The Internet Gambling Prohibition Act which was defeated in 2000 shows how much vested interest there is in the casino and gaming industry. Cyberspace is the last frontier when it comes to laws governing casinos. Only time will tell how legislation will catch-up with online casinos and gambling websites.

Adel Awwad is the webmaster of Online Casinos – Copyright © 2005

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