

To Whom It May Concern,

I know this last year has been especially turbulent for Portland poker. From what I understand the laws on the books contradict themselves and the practice appears unsustainable.

I have been involved in poker in this city for four years. I'm grateful for what the system in place provides me, it allowed me to learn to deal and propel myself in the industry outside of Portland without Dealer school training. I've gained a trade skill without investing any money, only time and effort. Despite a lack of traditional employment security and protections, I appreciate the freedom and opportunity dealing poker in Portland provides. The reason for that is the continuous generosity of the players in the community, and the sincerely collective effort of the staff and volunteers.

A long standing tradition of poker has never been stopped by law- we see the results of banning poker in the state of Texas. Underground, illegal, raked and over-raked games are thriving and enjoying national notoriety among players. The problem is self-explanatory. These environments are obviously less enticing, secure, and legitimate than a poker club in a strip mall- hugely monetarily profitable for the house, completely unregulated and untaxed, providing no employee or player securities.

If the Portland poker industry is dramatically shut down, the hundreds of people currently playing regularly are not likely to stop playing. The games are guaranteed to go underground and whatever concerns about labor laws or prize pools the opposition to social gaming has in regards to the industry, a ban ironically grants it the opportunity to become completely self-regulated. As a player and a dealer, for me it is a losing proposition.

The rather large group of volunteers currently facilitating social gaming relies on this practice financially, socially, and emotionally. An underground industry greatly narrows the field of available positions and would force the majority into unemployment, isolation, and questionable resolutions.

I understand the laws in place make little sense, and the desire for a reform that provides a safe, responsible gaming industry. Nevertheless, I urge those who make these decisions to recognize a ban on poker is a laughable notion. Poker will continue, and we all agree regulations are necessary for an evolved society.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Bella Tolmatsky
Portland, OR

Sent from my iPhone