

Maryland readies for slot referendum

Lawmakers in Annapolis are moving to tighten up campaign reporting requirements for the November referendum on legalizing slot machines, as both sides gird for what's expected to be a free-spending battle to win voters.

The Senate heard two bills last week that would expand and clarify the mandates for groups and businesses to report their expenditures on either side of the slots debate.

When legislators decided in last fall's special session to put the question of legalizing slots to a referendum, they also took a step to give voters more information about how much was being spent, and by whom, to influence the outcome.

The slots legislation included a provision requiring any corporation that spends more than USD 10,000 on campaign materials to file reports with the state Board of Elections before and after the vote November 4. But some legislators say they have since realized that the campaign-spending disclosure provisions tacked onto the end of the 74-page bill leave potential loopholes.

Maryland law does not limit how much money can be donated to a group fighting for or against a ballot question. There are no limits on spending, either.