

# New York considers expanding race track wagering

New York legislators want to tap casino gambling for greater revenues, but the requirements of passing a state constitutional amendment make the opening of new casinos unlikely anytime soon. So Governor David Paterson and some lawmakers are considering changing rules for existing video lottery machines and slots at racetracks.

Current regulations require racinos to operate no more than sixteen hours a day, or one hundred twelve hours per week. But proposals are being debated that would expand hours to one hundred forty per week for big tracks like Yonkers and Saratoga, and one hundred twenty-eight at smaller venues. This would allow twenty-four hour operation for tracks on weekends and busy days.

Another option under consideration is the expansion of games. Presently, only video poker and slots are available. New relaxed rules would allow the play of electronic versions of casino table games.

Proponents of the changes say that as much as USD 500 million in annual revenue may be generated by loosening the gambling law. State legislators may introduce bills to change the rules, and lottery officials are determining if their department can authorize such adjustments without the need for a new law.