

PA House Introduces Esports Betting Legislation

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On June 8, 2021, legislation was introduced in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives that would legalize esports betting statewide. Pennsylvania's sports wagering statute, as currently written, permits wagering on any "sporting event," a term which is defined to mean "a professional or collegiate sports or athletic event or a motor race event." See 4 Pa. Cons. Stat. Ann. § 13C01. There is no mention of esports. The Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board has opined that because esports is not explicitly listed among the "sporting events" upon which wagering is permitted, the Board does not have the authority to allow esports betting.

The newly-introduced bill is a straightforward attempt to overcome this hurdle; if passed, it would simply amend the definition of "sporting event" in the sports wagering statute to include esports. Notably, as currently written, the bill would not establish a separate regulatory/licensing framework for esports betting – it would simply extend the licensing and operational requirements presently imposed upon sports betting operators, vendors and suppliers to esports betting operators, vendors and suppliers.

It is still too early to tell whether this legislation will succeed in bringing esports betting to Pennsylvania's nearly 13 million residents. White and Williams will continue to monitor the bill's progress, and provide updates regarding significant developments. If you have questions or would like more information, please contact Frank A. Bruno (brunof@whiteandwilliams.com; 215.864.6225) or Zachery B. Roth (rothz@whiteandwilliams.com; 215.864.6274).

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