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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Law aids gaming crackdown

As the former associate special agent in charge of the Chicago field office of the FBI, I saw firsthand how organized crime intimidated and attempted to infiltrate legitimate businesses throughout the City of Chicago.

Current Illinois law makes the prosecution of these illegal activities challenging.

There are more than 20,000 licensed and an estimated 40,000 unlicensed "amusement-only" games throughout the state operating without any oversight and monitoring illegal transactions is exceedingly difficult.

The recently approved Illinois Video Gaming Act gives law enforcement officials clear standards by which to judge the legality of video gaming terminals.

On Aug. 1 of this year, all "amusement-only" machines will be illegal throughout the state. The simple possession of unlicensed machines will be a Class IV felony. No longer will prosecutors and officers have to conduct lengthy investigations to determine that the games are illegal. Either a machine will be licensed or it will be illegal. The Illinois Gaming Board will apply strict standards to ensure that individuals associated with organized crime groups are not licensed.

The act also mandates that every video gaming terminal must be connected to a state-managed cen-

tral system, just like the Illinois Lottery.

The state will monitor the integrity of each terminal and the financial data from every transaction involved.

This oversight is critical to combat illegal activity and maintain the integrity of the system. It will also ensure that appropriate taxes are collected by the state and local governments.

Gaming is a complex issue that raises questions that must be considered by local elected officials. However, in my opinion, formed by many years of law enforcement experience, fears of increased crime should not be at the heart of the debate.

On the contrary, the Illinois Video Gaming Act should assist state officials in ensuring that the ownership, distribution and operation of video gaming terminals is not tainted by criminal associates and the proceeds of gambling in Illinois fund legitimate expenses of the state and local governments.

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[Editor's note: Back to Work Illinois is a coalition of groups that support video poker as a way to generate revenue for the state.]