A Conservative Argument for Legalizing Internet Gaming

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Conservative columnist Michelle Minton just wrote an interesting op-ed piece for Forbes.com on why Republicans, and by extension, conservatives in general, should favor legalized Internet gambling.

Minton's arguments come in the wake of the recent passage by the House Financial Services Committee of a bill that would legalize Internet gambling, including online poker, in the United States and set up a federal regulatory framework for it.

Her case in favor of the bill is a libertarian one: a classic conservative argument, she says, is "that the government should not have the right to tell private individuals what behavior they may or may not engage in the privacy of their own home, so long as that activity doesn't infringe on the rights of others." This applies very well to gaming in one's own living room, using one's own computer and mouse.

A legislator's private belief that people shouldn't gamble, she says, is "no reason to abandon the conservative ideals of limited government, individual rights and personal responsibility in the public sphere."

Minton's op-ed is a refreshing addition to the sometimes stale debate about Internet gaming. It's noteworthy that nearly all states already countenance some form of gambling in public places, whether it be riverboat casinos, horse racing, or lotteries. It is indeed intrusive for the government to ban essentially the same activity when it is engaged in privately. And we also take the view that

some forms of Internet "gaming," such as poker, are not gambling but games of skill that are not even properly viewed as illegal under existing law.

In addition, the enforcement resources that some states spend on prosecuting Internet gaming could better be used against real white-collar crimes, not victimless ones.

Crime in the Suites is authored by the Ifrah Law Firm, a Washington DC-based law firm specializing in the defense of government investigations and litigation. Our client base spans many regulated industries, particularly e-business, e-commerce, government contracts, gaming and healthcare.

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