



[Online Poker Finds New Supporter on the Hill](#)

June 17, 2011

Legalization of online poker has found a new and unlikely supporter on Capitol Hill. Rep. Joe Barton (R-Tex.), an outspoken conservative, [has announced that he will support legalization](#) and is planning some parliamentary maneuvers to try to get it to the House floor eventually.

It turns out that in addition to being a conservative, Rep. Barton is also an avid poker player, and his interest in the game is one factor that impelled him to back legalization, according to the *Las Vegas Sun*.

On the other side of the aisle, Sen. Harry Reid (D-Nev.) has long supported legalization, but the new partnership with Rep. Barton, who is the chairman emeritus of the Energy and Commerce Committee, will strengthen the chances for a bill to pass.

Some legislators in both houses are continuing their efforts to pass a major revision to the 2006 Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act, which has been interpreted to prohibit online poker as a practical matter. The fact that Rep. Barton is chairman emeritus of a committee with jurisdiction over the bill may prove critical. [Rep. Barton told The Hill](#) that he had spoken with House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Rep. Fred Upton (R-Mich.), about moving a bill through the committee.

Last year, Rep. Barney Frank was able to guide a bill to legalize online poker through the House Financial Services Committee, but now in a Republican-controlled House the Financial Services Committee is chaired by Rep. Spencer Bachus (R-Ala.). Rep. Bachus, an opponent of online poker, would be able to block any potential bill from getting out of committee. The other House committee chairmen with jurisdiction over a bill to legalize online poker, including Rep. Lamar Smith (R-Tex.) of the Judiciary Committee and Rep. Dave Camp (R-Mich.) of the Ways and Means Committee, are also not supporters of legalization.

Barton said he plans to introduce his bill, which he describes as still a work in progress, at some point this summer to the Energy and Commerce Committee.

This new support on Capitol Hill is a positive sign in the movement to legalize online poker. [We wrote previously about how the events of "Black Friday" were chilling the legislative momentum](#) in state legislatures that seemed to be waiting for federal action. However, with significant support on the federal front, there is reason to be optimistic that legislative action will occur to allow for the legalization of online poker at the federal level, which would allow state legislatures to push their own bills in support of online poker.

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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