

How long will N.J. sports betting monopoly on the East Coast last?

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By Jonathan D. Salant | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com

WASHINGTON -- New Jersey is in a position to become the only state east of Nevada with full-fledged sports betting, with the operators of Monmouth Park saying they could begin taking wagers on Memorial Day.

But that monopoly won't last very long.

The Garden State's neighbors -- Delaware, New York and Pennsylvania -- all acted to allow sports betting in case the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the federal prohibition against such wagering. So did West Virginia.

Those four states likely will follow New Jersey into the world of legal sports betting within months.

"New Jersey will have a head start," said John Boyd, principal with the Princeton-based Boyd Co., which advises companies on where to locate.

It will take other states longer to offer sports betting than Monmouth Park's plan to kick it off on Memorial Day. States have to license outlets and adopt rules and regulations.

"It's not like turning on a light," said Daniel Wallach, a gaming and sports law attorney with Becker & Poliakoff in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

In fact, Geoff Freeman, president and chief executive of the American Gaming Association, the trade group for the casino industry, said New Jersey may be taking bets on the National Basketball Association finals.

"New Jersey is at the top of the list," Freeman said. Delaware could quickly join New Jersey. It's already one of four states that offered sports betting under the federal law that the Supreme Court struck down.

But Delaware's wagering so far was restricted to parlays in which bettors chose multiple professional football games to win.

Gov. John Carney said on Twitter that he hoped to have single-game sports betting up and running at Delaware's casinos by the end of June.

Pennsylvania's legislature already has passed legislation to legalize sports betting but Wallach said the Keystone State is not close to taking wagers. The state must enact regulations and the venues that want to offer sports betting must pay a \$10 million licensing fee.

"They're not in a position yet to implement sports betting," Wallach said.

Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board spokesman Doug Harbach told pennlive.com that there was no timetable for beginning sports betting.

In New York, lawmakers are aiming to have rules on the books by June 20 , when the current legislative session is scheduled to end, according to syracuse.com.

At the same time, the Oneida Indian Nation said it already had the authority to take bets at its own casinos near Syracuse, New York, more than 300 miles from Atlantic City.

"The nation has made preparations to offer sports betting at venues throughout the Oneida reservation, and we will be putting those plans into operation in the near future," spokesman Joel Barkin said.

And in West Virginia, Lottery Commission Director Alan Larrick said sports betting could start within 90 days, getting the rules and regulations in place before the start of football season.

"In a perfect world, we'd like to be up and running by then," Larrick told the Charleston Gazette-Mail . Freeman estimated that \$150 billion was bet annually on sports, all but \$4.5 billion illegally, and suggested that the market could grow beyond that with legal wagering.

Boyd said the benefits could go beyond wagering, encouraging the high-tech community to develop products combining live sports, betting and live chats.

"Beyond Atlantic City, this sends a message to the IT community that New Jersey is ripe for gaming-related app development and increased data security operations," Boyd said. "I can almost envision a new high-tech corridor from Camden to Atlantic City."

Meanwhile, Atlantic City will have another enticement for visitors at the height of tourism season.

"This will be an opportunity to gain new customers and keep those customers," Wallach said. "It is absolutely a home run for the state positioning itself to be the first mover."