
Commerce & Gaming Committee

HB 2001

Brief Description: Concerning amusement games.

Sponsors: Representatives Zeiger and Condotta.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Defines the skill required for amusement games regulated by the Gambling Commission.
- Permits amusement games to include elements of chance.
- Clarifies the Gambling Commission's authority over amusement games.

Hearing Date: 2/10/15

Staff: David Rubenstein (786-7153).

Background:

Under the Gambling Act (Act), the Washington State Gambling Commission (Commission) regulates wagering on activities such as social card games, bingo, raffles, amusement games, punch boards, pull-tabs, and fund-raising events.

Several sections of the Act address amusement games. An amusement game is a game played for entertainment that requires, to a material degree, skill of the contestant and that awards merchandise prizes only, such as crane games. The material degree of skill required for contestants is defined in rule. Various types of amusement games are also spelled out in rule, each with a specific set of standards.

In general, if a device includes elements of chance, it is classified as a "gambling device." Ownership or possession of a gambling device is a felony, unless the owner is licensed by the Commission.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The Act authorizes the Commission to issue licenses allowing persons, associations, or organizations to conduct or operate amusement games in such a manner and at such locations as the Commission may determine. The Act lists particular locations where amusement games may be conducted, including certain fairs, civic centers, or amusement parks.

Commission rules allow licensed amusement game operators to conduct amusement games at commercially operated family sports complexes, skating facilities, and grocery and department stores.

Summary of Bill:

The degree of skill required for a device to qualify as an amusement game is defined. The player's physical or mental abilities must play an important role in determining the outcome of the game, and the success rate of the average player must be likely to improve with repeated play or practice.

Amusement games are permitted to include randomly generated features or events, or elements of chance. Those features may be unpredictable variations in the objects or patterns the player encounters during the game. The device operator may not be in control of the random events, and the occurrence and frequency of the events may not depend on the number of plays completed by the player or tickets issued to the player.

The Commission has rule-making authority over amusement games and may set fees for testing the games for compliance.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.