

New Jersey appeals to the U.S. Supreme Court in its quest to legalize sports betting

By JENNIFER BOGDAN, Staff Writer | Posted: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 1:08 pm

New Jersey is asking the U.S. Supreme Court to make the final call on whether the state can legalize sports betting.

Following a steady stream of defeats in lower courts, New Jersey has filed a petition asking the highest federal court to take the case that calls into question the subject of states' rights. Some believe a ruling in favor of the state could provide a much-needed boost to Atlantic City's economy.

State Sen. Raymond Lesniak, a strong supporter of the state's quest, said the court will decide by May or June whether it will take the case. Lesniak, D-Union, has described some of the blows dealt as devastating setbacks, but Tuesday said he remains hopeful that the state can be successful. "The bottom line is, if you're not in it, you can't win it, and we're in it," Lesniak said.

More than two years ago, New Jersey voters overwhelmingly approved referendum to allow sports betting at Atlantic City casinos and horse racing tracks. Since then, however, the National Collegiate Athletic Association and several professional sports leagues have fought the state with a lawsuit, prohibiting it from entering the industry expected to be worth billions.

The objections are based on a 1992 federal law that prohibits all but four states from authorizing sports wagering. Those four states—Nevada, Delaware, Montana and Oregon—legalized the practice before the law was passed.

The petition filed on behalf of Gov. Chris Christie and other state parties Feb. 12 asks the Supreme Court to consider whether the prohibition under the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act, also known as PAPSA, violates the U.S. Constitution by infringing on states' rights. It also asks whether the law unfairly favors

