



Cleveland jury finds six guilty on gambling charges

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on March 16, 2012 at 5:20 PM, updated March 17, 2012 at 4:06 AM

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- A Cleveland Municipal Court jury has convicted six people on gambling charges involving **Internet sweepstakes businesses**.

Randall Thorne, owner of the former Internet Depot on West 117th Street, and Michael Harris, owner of the Blackhawk on Lake Shore Boulevard and Blackhawk II on St. Clair Avenue, were found guilty Thursday. The jury also convicted four of Harris' employees-- Sreyleak Ny, Team Ny, Catherine Miller and Bona Suon.

All will be sentenced April 17 on charges of gambling, operating a gambling house and possession of criminal tools -- namely computers. Harris was convicted on two counts of each charge and the others a single count of each charge. Each count carries a maximum penalty of six months in jail and a \$1,000 fine.

Sweepstakes patrons buy Internet time to play video slots and other games. Cleveland considers the games to be illegal gambling, but supporters say the fact that the games have a predetermined number of winners makes the concept more like a raffle.

Regulation varies across the state, with some cities imposing fees on the businesses, known as cafes. Others, like Cleveland, **have put moratoriums** on permits in hopes the state will rule on the issue.

Proposed state legislation would require the Ohio Casino Control Commission to test machines and determine whether the games are legal. Communities would be allowed to ban sweepstakes cafes.

Cleveland police raided the three Internet cafes in late 2010, seizing more than 100 computers and \$10,000.

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Cleveland police Sgt. John Traine removes computer equipment from the Internet Depot in November 2010.