

Fla. Gov. Rick Scott Signs Law Banning Internet Cafe Gambling

Gov. Rick Scott on Wednesday signed a bill that empowers law enforcement officers to crack down on illegal gambling machines in arcades and strip malls across Florida.

"The Legislature did the right thing to crack down on illegal gaming operators," Scott said. "We look forward to turning our focus back on jobs and education in this session."

The law offers new definitions of illegal gambling machines, places new restrictions on arcade games and bans electronic casino look-alikes in all forms. Local law enforcement officers are charged with enforcing the law.

"No matter what your position is on gambling in Florida, there are important reasons why these gambling cafes have no place in Florida," said Scott Plakon, a Republican politician who served as the representative for District 37 of Florida's House of Representatives from 2008 to 2012. "Those who profit from these shady businesses argue that the state should regulate them—not shut them down."

Plakon introduced a bill banning Internet cafes in 2012. The Simulated Gambling Prohibition and Community Protection Act was well received by Scott and Florida's Cabinet members.

The signed law comes after a three-year state and federal probe into illegal gambling at Internet cafes run by Allied Veterans of the World. The operations have since been shut down and non-affiliated Internet cafes are also closing shop.

The issue has hit Scott's administration close to home. Jennifer Carroll resigned from her position as lieutenant

governor soon after the arrests because she had previously worked as a consultant for Allied Veterans. Fifty-seven owners and operators associated with Allied Veterans were arrested as part of the sting.