

IOWA & ILLINOIS

Video slots banned at horse, dog tracks

The Associated Press
DES MOINES — State regulators on Thursday said no to video slot and video lottery machines at dog and horse tracks.

The 5-0 vote by the Iowa Racing and Gaming Commission would prohibit video games requiring any decision-making on the part of a player. Payouts from such games also come in the form of paper credit slips rather than coins.

Traditional slot machines with spinning wheels and crank arms would be allowed at the horse track in Altoona and dog tracks in Dubuque and Council Bluffs.

The ruling will go next month to the Administrative Rules Review Committee, which can either hold up the commission's action or allow it to take effect. Either way, the issue is a strong candidate to wind up before the Legislature again when it convenes in January.

Commission administrator Jack Ketterer said legislators need to do a better job of defining "slot machines" than they did last session as well as to decide if other casino games, such as keno, should be allowed

Canella elected chairman of RGC

The Associated Press
DES MOINES — Richard Canella of Fort Madison was elected Thursday by his colleagues as the new chairman of the Iowa Racing and Gaming Commission.

Rita Sealock of Council Bluffs becomes the panel's vice chairwoman.

Canella replaces Loraine May of Des Moines, who fulfilled her two-year term as chairwoman. Canella had been the commission's vice chairman the past two years.

at the tracks.

Keno is a lottery-type game commonly offered in Las Vegas casinos in which players mark numbers on a pre-number sheet of paper and place a bet. They then watch an electronic game board for possible winning numbers.

"There seemed to be no distinction between different types of electronic gaming devices. It is very difficult to determine what the Legislature intended when there was no discussion or debate," Ketterer said. "It puts the commission in a very difficult situation."

Ketterer said the Legislature "has some duty to come back and give us some direction on this."

James Campbell of Iowa West Racing Association criticized the commission for taking a "negative approach" and interpreting legislative intent too narrowly. He said Iowa Supreme Court rulings have allowed broader definitions of gambling machines.

"Slot machines have broader definition by law. We feel the commission is required by its very existence to follow the laws of the state of Iowa," Campbell said.

However, staff attorney Jeff Farrell said Thursday's ruling was "consistent with the legislative intent."

"I think it's legally supportable," he said.

4 children die in trailer home fire

The Associated Press
WELLMAN — Four children died and six people were injured in a fire that destroyed a trailer home.

Washington County medical examiner Dennis Shimp identified the dead as Jason McNabb, 4; Linda Behrens, 12; Robert Behrens, 8; and Ezra Darling, 5.

The Behrens children and the Darling boy were children of Robert and Robin Darling, who owned the home that burned.

The McNabb child was their grandson and the son of Nancy Darling and Gary McNabb of

Marengo, who were visiting at the time of the blaze. Both sets of parents escaped. Shimp said two other older children escaped.

Shimp said the victims likely died of smoke inhalation. The bodies were badly burned when they were recovered, he said.

"The father (Darling) said that as soon as he got out, the whole thing burst into flames. I don't think he had a chance to even try to go back in. The fire department said that by the time they got there, there was nothing they could do," Shimp said.

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Missing toddler's body found

The Associated Press
MASON CITY — The body of a toddler was discovered Thursday at a creek near downtown Mason City and police said they were treating the death as a homicide.

John Snyder Jr., a 20-month-old, blond-haired, blue-eyed boy, had been reported missing Wednesday morning.

His body was found at about 10 a.m. Thursday against a tree stump sticking out of the water near the north bank of Willow Creek, said Mason City Police Chief Duane Jewell. An autopsy was scheduled.

A day earlier, police reported finding the boy's blue pajama bottoms and diaper by the creek, about two blocks south of his home and about one-half mile upstream from where the body was discovered Thursday by searchers using dogs.

John Snyder Sr., had told police he last saw his son late Tuesday night and that the boy was not in his bed when he checked on him about 8 a.m. Wednesday.



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Officials withdraw prison bills

By Mike Glover

The Associated Press

DES MOINES — Clarinda officials on Thursday stopped trying to collect a final \$138,000 they said was part of the cost of developing a proposal for a new prison.

In a letter to Treasurer Michael Fitzgerald and Auditor Richard Johnson, officials of Clarinda Heartland of Iowa Inc. continued to defend the costs but said they want to avoid protracted controversy.

"All of these costs were necessary in order to bring this project into being and the Clarinda prison would not have been possible without them," the group's letter said.

Despite that, the group stopped trying to collect the final part of the money it had claimed the state should pay.

"Based upon the comments of state officials about these costs it appears likely that discussion of these development costs may be protracted and could result in delays in the implementation of the state's schedule for bringing these new critically needed prison beds into service," the group said.

In fact, the furor over the bills already has delayed the sched-

uled financing of the prison.

State officials had hoped to structure a bond issue last week to start the prison construction but that was delayed as officials studied the development costs.

Fitzgerald said officials could not complete the bond issue until they knew precisely how much would have to be included for development costs.

He said officials now planned to move the bond issue Tuesday, and would issue \$22.6 million in bonds to finance the prison.

"What it tells us is that taxpayers are going to save another \$138,000," Fitzgerald said.

The prison issue has sparked a major controversy that is likely to continue even after the last bills were dropped.

Officials originally submitted nearly \$500,000 in bills, including nearly \$200,000 in bills from a law firm including Gov. Terry Branstad's former chief of staff, Doug Gross.

They claimed all of those costs were development costs for the new prison. Included in the bills were charges for repeated phone calls Gross made to Branstad and other state officials on behalf of the project.

A state ethics committee is investigating whether Gross

improperly lobbied the governor on behalf of the project.

In the face of the initial uproar, Clarinda officials withdrew all but \$138,000 of the bills.

Disclosure that those bills included things like first-class air travel and meals at posh restaurants sparked yet another controversy.

Fitzgerald said state officials hadn't rejected the bills but had merely asked for justification.

"Every time we've asked them to put justification on the table, they've turned and run."

Illinois to add third boot camp for youths

The Associated Press

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. — Illinois is adding another "boot camp" for young felons to stem the growth of its overcrowded prison population, officials announced Wednesday.

The third camp, modeled after programs at Dixon Springs and Greene County, will be located in the area of the Du Quoin Fairgrounds, replacing a 200-bed minimum-security work camp that opened there last year.

The 120-day boot camp program is designed for inmates aged 17 to 35 with sentences of eight years or less for non-violent crimes. Offered on a voluntary basis, it features intense military-style discipline, physical exercise and labor, as well as schooling and substance abuse counseling.

Graduates serve a period of community supervision, including at least three months of electronic monitoring which indicates when they are home or away.

Gov. Jim Edgar said the boot camp program has saved Illinois taxpayers more than \$6 million since it began in 1990.

"This is a program that gets tough on criminals, not on the taxpayer's pocketbook," he said in a statement.

Edgar said the recidivism rate for boot camp graduates after one year is 5 percent compared to 11 percent for similar parol-

ees released from traditional Illinois prisons.

The two current boot camps house 438 inmates. The state's prisons have more than 35,800 inmates — 157 more than they were designed to hold.

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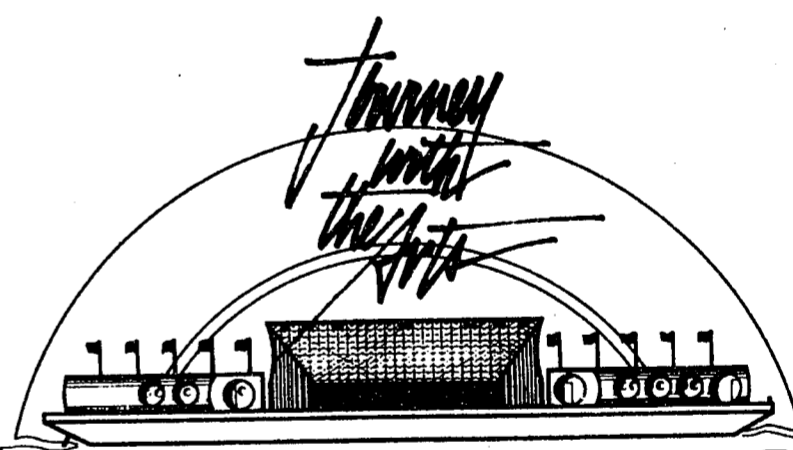
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