

## CHARITY FUNDRAISING

# Charity gaming banned at Lucky's

State finds evidence of illegal gambling

By Kathleen Gray

Gannett Michigan

One of the bigger charity poker halls in the state has been at least temporarily banned from operating charity gaming after an investigation by the Michigan Gaming Control Board and attorney general's office found evidence of illegal gambling.

All charity gaming and poker games have been suspended at Lucky's Poker Room in Genesee Township, near Flint.

The action came earlier this week after investigators found evidence that the facility was allegedly making illegal payoffs to customers betting on computer slot machines. Operating slot machines outside of licensed casinos is illegal.

Five charities were operating their "Millionaire Parties" at Lucky's, which offered a venue for charity poker games seven days a week.

Those charities will have to find another facility to host their gaming nights.

A post on Lucky's Facebook page Tuesday noted, "Lucky's is closed until further notice. We would like to thank you for your patronage and support."

"Because of the illegal activity at this location, immediate action to protect the safety, welfare, and integrity of gaming is necessary," Rick Kalm, executive director of the MGCB, said in a statement. "New proposed rules will hopefully increase charitable organizations' involvement and raise awareness of their exposure when locations break the law."

The Michigan Gaming Control Board is considering new rules that will change the face of charity gaming in the state.

The proposed rules have caused an uproar among charities, suppliers and gaming facilities, and would: Limit a poker gaming room to 120 days a year; require that a charity have five of its members working at every charity event; limit poker rooms to one charity event a night; require that charities raise \$2,000 a year from fundraising other than gambling before they can be licensed; and require that charities hold their gaming events in their own or adjacent counties.

A final draft of the rules is being developed and could be put into place by mid-January.

The charity poker boom has become a big business with too few controls, gaming board officials said. It has grown from \$7.9 million in revenue in 2004 to \$197 million in 2011.

The probe into Lucky's is ongoing to determine if charges will be filed, officials said.

*Kathleen Gray is a reporter for the Detroit Free Press.*