

# FLORIDA GAMBLING STATUTES

**A GUIDE FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT**



**FLORIDA GAMING CONTROL COMMISSION  
4070 ESPLANADE WAY, SUITE 250  
TALLAHASSEE, FL 32399  
850-895-8125**

# FLORIDA GAMBLING STATUTES A LAW ENFORCEMENT GUIDE

The intent of this Law Enforcement Guide is to collect and arrange relevant Florida Statutes from F.S. Chapters 849 and 551, so as to assist law enforcement officers to more easily identify gambling statutes based upon subject area.

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## Actions Against Persons

551.113(1) A person who has not attained 21 years of age may not play or operate a slot machine or have access to the designated slot machine gaming area of a facility of a slot machine licensee.

(2) A slot machine licensee or agent or employee of a slot machine licensee may not knowingly allow a person who has not attained 21 years of age:

(a) To play or operate any slot machine.

(b) To be employed in any position allowing or requiring access to the designated slot machine gaming area of a facility of a slot machine licensee.

(c) To have access to the designated slot machine gaming area of a facility of a slot machine licensee.

849.01 Whoever by herself or himself, her or his servant, clerk or agent, or in any other manner has, keeps, exercises or maintains a gaming table or room, or gaming implements or apparatus, or house, booth, tent, shelter or other place for the purpose of gaming or gambling or in any place of which she or he may directly or indirectly have charge, control or management, either exclusively or with others, procures, suffers or permits any person to play for money or other valuable thing at any game whatever, whether heretofore prohibited or not, commits a misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.

849.02 Whoever acts as servant, clerk, agent, or employee of any person in the violation of s. 849.01 shall be punished in the manner and to the extent therein mentioned.

849.05 If any of the implements, devices or apparatus commonly used in games of chance in gambling houses or by gamblers, are found in any house, room, booth, shelter or other place it shall be prima facie evidence that the said house, room, booth, shelter or other place where the same are found is kept for the purpose of gambling.

849.231 (1) Except in instances when the following described implements or apparatus are being held or transported by authorized persons for the purpose of destruction, as hereinafter provided, and except in instances when the following described instruments or apparatus are



being held, sold, transported, or manufactured by persons who have registered with the United States Government pursuant to the provisions of Title 15 of the United States Code, ss. 1171 et seq., as amended, so long as the described implements or apparatus are not displayed to the general public, sold for use in Florida, or held or manufactured in contravention of the requirements of 15 U.S.C. ss. 1171 et seq., it shall be unlawful for any person to manufacture, sell, transport, offer for sale, purchase, own, or have in his or her possession any roulette wheel or table, faro layout, crap table or layout, chemin de fer table or layout, chuck-a-luck wheel, bird cage such as used for gambling, bolita balls, chips with house markings, or any other device, implement, apparatus, or paraphernalia ordinarily or commonly used or designed to be used in the operation of gambling houses or establishments, excepting ordinary dice and playing cards.

849.231(2) In addition to any other penalties provided for the violation of this section, any occupational license held by a person found guilty of violating this section shall be suspended for a period not to exceed 5 years.

## **Nuisances**

849.20 Any room, house, building, boat, vehicle, structure or place wherein any machine or device, or any part thereof, the possession, operation or use of which is prohibited by ss. 849.15-849.23, shall be maintained or operated, and each of such machines or devices, is declared to be a common nuisance. If a person has knowledge, or reason to believe, that his or her room, house, building, boat, vehicle, structure or place is occupied or used in violation of the provisions of ss. 849.15-849.23 and by acquiescence or consent suffers the same to be used, such room, house, building, boat, vehicle, structure or place shall be subject to a lien for and may be sold to pay all fines or costs assessed against the person guilty of such nuisance, for such violation, and the several state attorneys shall enforce such lien in the courts of this state having jurisdiction.

849.21 An action to enjoin any nuisance as herein defined may be brought by any person in the courts of equity in this state. If it is made to appear by affidavit or otherwise, to the satisfaction of the court, or judge in vacation, that such nuisance exists, a temporary writ of injunction shall forthwith issue restraining the defendant from conducting or permitting the continuance of such nuisance until the conclusion of the action. Upon application of the complainant in such a proceeding, the court or judge may also enter an order restraining the defendant and all other persons from removing, or in any way interfering with the machines or devices or other things used in connection with the violation of ss. 849.15-849.23 constituting such a nuisance. No bond shall be required in instituting such proceedings.



## **Forfeiture/Surrender of Funds/Property Rights**

849.12 All sums of money and every other valuable thing drawn and won as a prize, or as a share of a prize, or as a share, percentage or profit of the principal promoter or operator, in any lottery, and all money, currency or property of any kind to be disposed of, or offered to be disposed of, by chance or device in any scheme or under any pretext by any person, and all sums of money or other thing of value received by any person by reason of her or his being the owner or holder of any ticket or share of a ticket in a lottery, or pretended lottery, or of a share or right in any such schemes of chance or device and all sums of money and other thing of value used in the setting up, conducting or operation of a lottery, and all money or other thing of value at stake, or used or displayed in or in connection with any illegal gambling or any illegal gambling device contrary to the laws of this state, shall be forfeited, and may be recovered by civil proceedings, filed, or by action for money had and received, to be brought by the Department of Legal Affairs or any state attorney, or other prosecuting officer, in the circuit courts in the name and on behalf of the state; the same to be applied when collected as all other penal forfeitures are disposed of.

849.19 The right of property in and to any machine, apparatus or device as defined in s. 849.16 and to all money and other things of value therein, is declared not to exist in any person, and the same shall be forfeited and such money or other things of value shall be forfeited to the county in which the seizure was made and shall be delivered forthwith to the clerk of the circuit court and shall by her or him be placed in the fine and forfeiture fund of said county.

849.232 There shall be no right of property in any of the implements or devices enumerated or included in s. 849.231 and upon the seizure of any such implement, device, apparatus or paraphernalia by an authorized enforcement officer the same shall be delivered to and held by the clerk of the court having jurisdiction of such offenses and shall not be released by such clerk until he or she shall be advised by the prosecuting officer of such court that the said implement is no longer required as evidence and thereupon the said clerk shall deliver the said implement to the sheriff of the county who shall immediately cause the destruction of such implement in the presence of the said clerk or his or her authorized deputy.

## **Actions Against Property Owners**

849.03 Whoever, whether as owner or agent, knowingly rents to another a house, room, booth, tent, shelter or place for the purpose of gaming shall be punished in the manner and to the extent mentioned in s. 849.01.



849.04 The proprietor, owner, or keeper of any E. O., keno or pool table, or billiard table, wheel of fortune, or other game of chance kept for the purpose of betting, who willfully and knowingly allows a minor or person who is mentally incompetent<sup>1</sup> or under guardianship to play at such game or to bet on such game of chance; or whoever aids or abets or otherwise encourages such playing or betting of any money or other valuable thing upon the result of such game of chance by a minor or person who is mentally incompetent or under guardianship, commits a felony of the third degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082, s. 775.083, or s. 775.084.

849.20 Any room, house, building, boat, vehicle, structure or place wherein any machine or device, or any part thereof, the possession, operation or use of which is prohibited by ss. 849.15-849.23, shall be maintained or operated, and each of such machines or devices, is declared to be a common nuisance. If a person has knowledge, or reason to believe, that his or her room, house, building, boat, vehicle, structure or place is occupied or used in violation of the provisions of ss. 849.15-849.23 and by acquiescence or consent suffers the same to be used, such room, house, building, boat, vehicle, structure or place shall be subject to a lien for and may be sold to pay all fines or costs assessed against the person guilty of such nuisance, for such violation, and the several state attorneys shall enforce such lien in the courts of this state having jurisdiction.

## **Law Enforcement**

551.109(6)(a) Any law enforcement officer or slot machine operator who has probable cause to believe that a violation of subsection (3), subsection (4), or subsection (5) has been committed by a person and that the officer or operator can recover the lost proceeds from such activity by taking the person into custody may, for the purpose of attempting to effect such recovery or for prosecution, take the person into custody on the premises and detain the person in a reasonable manner and for a reasonable period of time. If the operator takes the person into custody, a law enforcement officer shall be called to the scene immediately. The taking into custody and detention by a law enforcement officer or slot machine operator, if done in compliance with this subsection, does not render such law enforcement officer, or the officer's agency, or the slot machine operator criminally or civilly liable for false arrest, false imprisonment, or unlawful detention.

551.109(6)(b) Any law enforcement officer may arrest, either on or off the premises and without warrant, any person if there is probable cause to believe that person has violated subsection (3), subsection (4), or subsection (5).

<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this section, the term "person who is mentally incompetent" means a person who because of mental illness, intellectual disability, senility, excessive use of drugs or alcohol, or other mental incapacity is incapable of managing his or her property or caring for himself or herself or both.



(c) Any person who resists the reasonable effort of a law enforcement officer or slot machine operator to recover the lost slot machine proceeds that the law enforcement officer or slot machine operator had probable cause to believe had been stolen from the licensed facility and who is subsequently found to be guilty of violating subsection (3), subsection (4), or subsection (5) commits a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083, unless such person did not know or did not have reason to know that the person seeking to recover the lost proceeds was a law enforcement officer or slot machine operator.

849.17 Upon the arrest of any person charged with the violation of any of the provisions of ss. 849.15-849.23 the arresting officer shall take into his or her custody any such machine, apparatus or device, and its contents, and the arresting agency, at the place of seizure, shall make a complete and correct list and inventory of all such things so taken into his or her custody, and deliver to the person from whom such article or articles may have been seized, a true copy of the list of all such articles. The arresting agency shall retain all evidence seized and shall have the same forthcoming at any investigation, prosecution or other proceedings, incident to charges of violation of any of the provisions of ss. 849.15-849.23.

849.36 (1) Every vessel or vehicle used for, or in connection with, the removal, transportation, storage, deposit, or concealment of any lottery tickets, or used in connection with any lottery or game in violation of the statutes and laws of this state, shall be subject to seizure and forfeiture, as provided by the Florida Contraband Forfeiture Act.

(2) All gambling paraphernalia and lottery tickets as herein defined used in connection with a lottery, gambling, unlawful game of chance or hazard, in violation of the statutes and laws of this state, found by an officer in searching a vessel or vehicle used in the violation of the gambling laws shall be safely kept so long as it is necessary for the purpose of being used as evidence in any case, and as soon as may be afterwards, shall be destroyed by order of the court before whom the case is brought or certified to any other court having jurisdiction, either state or federal.

(3) The presence of any lottery ticket in any vessel or vehicle owned or being operated by any person charged with a violation of the gambling laws of the state, shall be prima facie evidence that such vessel or vehicle was or is being used in connection with a violation of the lottery and gambling statutes and laws of this state and as a means of removing, transporting, depositing, or concealing lottery tickets and shall be sufficient evidence for the seizure of such vessel or vehicle.

(4) The presence of lottery tickets in any room or place, including vessels and vehicles, shall be prima facie evidence that such room, place, vessel, or vehicle, and all apparatus, implements, machines, contrivances, or devices therein, (herein referred to as “gambling paraphernalia”)



capable of being used in connection with a violation of the lottery and gambling statutes and laws of this state and shall be sufficient evidence for the seizure of such gambling paraphernalia.

(5) It shall be the duty of every peace officer in this state finding any vessel, vehicle, or paraphernalia being used in violation of the statutes and laws of this state as aforesaid to seize and take possession of such property for disposition as hereinafter provided. It shall also be the duty of every peace officer finding any such property being so used, in connection with any lawful search made by her or him, to seize and take possession of the same for disposition as hereinafter provided.

## **Disposition**

849.18 Upon conviction of the person arrested for the violation of any of the provisions of ss. 849.15-849.23, the judge of the court trying the case, after such notice to the person convicted, and any other person whom the judge may be of the opinion is entitled to such notice, and as the judge may deem reasonable, shall issue to the sheriff of the county a written order adjudging and declaring any such machine, apparatus or device forfeited, and directing such sheriff to destroy the same, with the exception of the money. The order of the court shall state the time and place and the manner in which such property shall be destroyed, and the sheriff shall destroy the same in the presence of the clerk of the circuit court of such county.

849.37(1) Every peace officer, other than the sheriff, seizing property pursuant to the provisions of ss. 849.36-849.46 shall forthwith make return of the seizure thereof and deliver the said property to the sheriff of the county wherein the same was seized. The said return to the sheriff shall describe the property seized and give in detail the facts and circumstances under which the same was seized and state in full the reason why the seizing officer knew, or was led to believe, that the said property was being used for or in connection with a violation of the statutes and laws of this state prohibiting lotteries and gambling in this state. The said return shall contain the names of all persons, firms and corporations known to the seizing officer to be interested in the seized property.

(2) When property is seized by the sheriff pursuant to this chapter, or when property seized by another is delivered to the sheriff as aforesaid, the sheriff shall forthwith fix the approximate value thereof and make return thereof to the clerk of the circuit court as hereinafter provided.

(3) The return of the sheriff aforesaid shall contain a schedule of the property seized describing the same in reasonable detail and give in detail the facts and circumstances under which it was seized and state in full the reason why the seizing officer knew or was led to believe that the property was being used for or in connection with a violation of the statutes and laws of this



state prohibiting lotteries or gambling in this state; and a statement of the names of all persons, firms and corporations known to the sheriff to be interested in the seized property; and in cases where the said property was seized by another the sheriff shall attach to his or her said return, as an exhibit thereto, the return of the seizing officer to him or her.

(4) The sheriff shall hold the said property seized pending its disposal by the court as hereinafter provided.

## **Administrative Actions and Penalties**

551.109(2) Except as otherwise provided by law and in addition to any other penalty, any person who possesses a slot machine without the license required by this chapter or who possesses a slot machine at any location other than at the slot machine licensee's facility is subject to an administrative fine or civil penalty of up to \$10,000 per machine.

849.21 An action to enjoin any nuisance as herein defined may be brought by any person in the courts of equity in this state. If it is made to appear by affidavit or otherwise, to the satisfaction of the court, or judge in vacation, that such nuisance exists, a temporary writ of injunction shall forthwith issue restraining the defendant from conducting or permitting the continuance of such nuisance until the conclusion of the action. Upon application of the complainant in such a proceeding, the court or judge may also enter an order restraining the defendant and all other persons from removing, or in any way interfering with the machines or devices or other things used in connection with the violation of ss. 849.15-849.23 constituting such a nuisance. No bond shall be required in instituting such proceedings.

## **Distributors and Manufacturers**

551.109(2)(a) Slot machine manufacturers or slot machine distributors that hold appropriate licenses issued by the division who are authorized to maintain a slot machine storage and maintenance facility at any location in a county in which slot machine gaming is authorized by this chapter.

## **Possession**

849.15(1) It is unlawful:

(a) To manufacture, own, store, keep, possess, sell, rent, lease, let on shares, lend or give away, transport, or expose for sale or lease, or to offer to sell, rent, lease, let on shares, lend or give away, or permit the operation of, or for any person to permit to be placed, maintained, or used or kept in any room, space, or building owned, leased or occupied by the





person or under the person’s management or control, any slot machine or device or any part thereof; or

(b) To make or to permit to be made with any person any agreement with reference to any slot machine or device, pursuant to which the user thereof, as a result of any element of chance or other outcome unpredictable to him or her, may become entitled to receive any money, credit, allowance, or thing of value or additional chance or right to use such machine or device, or to receive any check, slug, token or memorandum entitling the holder to receive any money, credit, allowance or thing of value.

## **Players**

551.109(3) Any person who knowingly excludes, or takes any action in an attempt to exclude, anything of value from the deposit, counting, collection, or computation of revenues from slot machine activity, or any person who by trick, sleight-of-hand performance, a fraud or fraudulent scheme, or device wins or attempts to win, for himself or herself or for another, money or property or a combination thereof or reduces or attempts to reduce a losing wager in connection with slot machine gaming commits a felony of the third degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082, s. 775.083, or s. 775.084.

551.109(5) Theft of any slot machine proceeds or of property belonging to the slot machine operator or licensed facility by an employee of the operator or facility or by an employee of a person, firm, or entity that has contracted to provide services to the operator or facility constitutes a felony of the third degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.

849.08 Whoever plays or engages in any game at cards, keno, roulette, faro or other game of chance, at any place, by any device whatever, for money or other thing of value, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.

## **MISC**

849.16 Machines or devices which come within provisions of law defined.—

(1) As used in this chapter, the term “slot machine or device” means any machine or device or system or network of devices that is adapted for use in such a way that, upon activation, which may be achieved by, but is not limited to, the insertion of any piece of money, coin, account number, code, or other object or information, such device or system is directly or indirectly caused to operate or may be operated and if the user, whether by application of skill or by reason of any element of chance or any other outcome unpredictable by the user, may:



(a) Receive or become entitled to receive any piece of money, credit, allowance, or thing of value, or any check, slug, token, or memorandum, whether of value or otherwise, which may be exchanged for any money, credit, allowance, or thing of value or which may be given in trade; or

(b) Secure additional chances or rights to use such machine, apparatus, or device, even though the device or system may be available for free play or, in addition to any element of chance or unpredictable outcome of such operation, may also sell, deliver, or present some merchandise, indication of weight, entertainment, or other thing of value. The term “slot machine or device” includes, but is not limited to, devices regulated as slot machines pursuant to chapter 551.

(2) This chapter may not be construed, interpreted, or applied to the possession of a reverse vending machine. As used in this section, the term “reverse vending machine” means a machine into which empty beverage containers are deposited for recycling and which provides a payment of money, merchandise, vouchers, or other incentives. At a frequency less than upon the deposit of each beverage container, a reverse vending machine may pay out a random incentive bonus greater than that guaranteed payment in the form of money, merchandise, vouchers, or other incentives. The deposit of any empty beverage container into a reverse vending machine does not constitute consideration, and a reverse vending machine may not be deemed a slot machine as defined in this section.

(3) There is a rebuttable presumption that a device, system, or network is a prohibited slot machine or device if it is used to display images of games of chance and is part of a scheme involving any payment or donation of money or its equivalent and awarding anything of value.

