

## Professional Fire Fighters of Maryland endorses slots

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**The Professional Fire Fighters** of Maryland is the latest organization backing a proposal to legalize slot machine gambling in the state.

The 7,000-plus member organization — representing 20 local affiliates of the **International Association of Fire Fighters** — “voted overwhelmingly to endorse” the referendum.

“Passing the slots referendum and keeping revenue here in Maryland — when it’s already being spent in Pennsylvania, Delaware and West Virginia — is critical to public safety,” said LeRoy A. Wilkison, president of the Professional Fire of Maryland, in a statement Wednesday. “Budget problems flow downhill. And if the slots referendum doesn’t pass the state will reduce county funds — cutting public safety.”

The organization joins a growing number of groups endorsing slots in the state. Last week, the **Greater Baltimore Committee** threw its weight behind the referendum and the Maryland Chamber of Commerce and **Maryland Association of Counties** have done the same.

If approved, the slots plan would allow slots parlors at five locations: near Laurel Race Course in Anne Arundel County, in Baltimore City near Interstate 95 and Route 295, near Ocean Downs race course in Worcester County, near I-95 in Cecil County, and at Rocky Gap State Park in Allegany County.

Revenue would go largely to fund public education in the state. Five and a half percent would go to local governments, 7 percent to horse racing purses, 2.5 percent to racetrack renewal, and 1.5 percent to a \$20 million minority business investment fund.