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Gambling may be considered a sin by some people, but it's definitely a big business in the USA. In 2012, the "gaming" industry reported \$37.4 billion in revenue in the United States, an increase of nearly 5 percent over the previous year.

With the economy improving, the continued adoption of mobile internet-enabled devices and a proliferation of tribal casinos taking off across the country, the business of gambling in the U.S. is roaring back, and just had its second best year ever.

Last year, the national commercial casino industry saw its second-largest gross gaming revenues ever, according to a report from the [American Gaming Association](#) (AGA), a trade group representing those companies. The group also notes that state and local communities benefitted by receiving about \$8.6 billion through taxes and sharing agreements, and employs more than 300,000 people.

"At a time when many industries are still feeling the lingering effects of the so-called Great Recession, gaming companies are going strong," said Frank J. Fahrenkopf, Jr., president and CEO of the AGA. "We continue to provide much-needed jobs and tax revenue at a time when both are greatly needed."

There's no doubt, however, that legal gambling is easier and more locally-accessible now than at any time in our nation's history.

A Very Brief History of Gambling in the United States

1680-1750 – Gambling is part of human history, long before the United States, so it is

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have been during the Gold Rush days, starting in California, spreading to Nevada and then to Alaska. The wild west, saloons, etc... they were tolerated by early American settlers and lawmen, as long as they were closely watched and regulated.

1909 – Gambling in Nevada, however, had reached an impasse with the state government by the turn of the century, when there was a national movement against gambling, which was closely-related to the temperance movement against alcohol. In 1909, the state of Nevada outlawed gambling activities.

1920-1933 – Prohibition. With the enactment of the 18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which banned alcohol sales, transport and possession, not only did speak-easies become popular, but so did gambling. Because both liquor and gambling were illegal, organized crime/mobs were behind both – and generated extensive revenue from the enterprises. Gambling in the Western U.S. also became wide-spread again.

1931 – Nevada's legislature officially legalized gambling on March 19, 1931. During the same legislative session, the state also "liberalized" divorce laws. Both acts came only days after the federal approval to build the Hoover Dam.

At this point, Nevada became the first state in the nation to legalize organized gaming/gambling, and with prohibition still in effect, organized crime elements were among the first to open establishments. Las Vegas was the natural choice, being only a few hours from Los Angeles. While Prohibition ended two years later, the city had already engraved itself into the national psyche as the city for sin. In the 1950s, it would enjoy a major resurgence by drawing impressive performers like Frank Sinatra and the Rat Pack.

1976 – Nevada may have been the king of gambling, but at the center of the east coast population center that included 8 million New Yorkers, the state of New Jersey saw

an opportunity. In 1976, the state's voters approved gambling in Atlantic City. Now,

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commerce, email, etc... and gambling. The first online gambling casinos were registered the same year the internet became publically available: 1994. The Caribbean island of Antigua gets the credit for first allowing websites registered with the nation's domain to provide real-money gaming. It wouldn't take long for others to see the opportunity.

1996 – The First Online Indian Casino – The Mohawk Territory of Kahnawake started issuing licenses for gaming, to any organization in any country who would pay appropriate fees to the tribe. By the end of 1996, there were approximately 16 online gambling sites that used real money.

Late 1990s – As the internet grew, so did porn, file sharing, music-spreading (Napster) and ... online gambling. While most of the original games were slot machine style games, by 1998, the technology had advanced enough to allow poker rooms where gamblers could play in real-time against each other. In 1999, the Internet Gambling Prohibition Act was introduced in the U.S. Congress, but was not passed. It would, however, have a sequel.

Also during this time, many states , either through legislative action or voter referendums, approved limited gambling in specific areas, such as riverboat gambling, or in specific towns, such as touristy mountain communities above Denver.

2002 – The 5th US District Court of Appeals decided that online sports betting was not legal, but that online games of chance (non-sports) were okay.

2004 – 2006 – Justice Department declares all forms of internet gambling illegal; ads for it are abetting. Yahoo! And Google removed online gambling websites from their ads. Supreme Court denies review. Several U.S.-based websites are successfully prosecuted for hosting gambling activities.

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2011 – Three web-based betting websites charged with accepting “a financial instrument in connection with unlawful internet gambling.” Two of them later settled while under charges for money laundering.

2013 – [New Jersey again...](#) The state legalized internet gambling but... in doing so, they've drawn the ire of many Indian tribes and their casinos.

Most states now have some form of legalized gambling, varying from lottery games to full casino operations run by either tribal entities private corporations or state entities. And 85 percent of Americans view casino gaming as acceptable for themselves or others.

This figure represents the highest acceptability level in the last decade. Further, young adults are even more favorable toward casino gaming, with 89 percent of those ages 21-39 saying it is acceptable for themselves or others.

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