

# Illinois bill would let fans bet on Oscars, Grammys

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*Credit: Alexander Lipko*

For those whose Super Bowl is the Academy Awards, a bill in Illinois seeks to give the events equal treatment under the law — for betting purposes.

Senate Bill 2667 would update the state’s Sports Wagering Act to include awards shows such as the Emmys, Grammys, Oscars and Tonys under the definition of “sports events” for legal wagering purposes. The bill would also give the Illinois Gaming Board authority to implement rules, including emergency rulemaking powers, to oversee and regulate betting.

Sen. Sara Feigenholtz, D-Chicago, who introduced the bill, told State Affairs the idea came from one of her constituents.

“Most of the legislation I sponsor is driven by constituents sharing ideas — and this is one of them,” Feigenholtz said. “Currently, seven states allow betting on the Academy Awards across various Oscar categories — and many people with interests outside the sports world want to partake, especially those who love movies, musicals, and theater.

“Legal awards show betting creates a new way to attract customers during a major cultural moment in a community like the one I represent, which already hosts many Oscar watch parties. This proposal is just one more tool in the toolbox to bring people into our restaurants and bars.”

Sports betting has exploded in the years since the U.S. Supreme Court lifted a ban on sports gambling in most states in 2018. Revenue from sports betting reached \$16.83 billion from January through November of last year, according to the most recent numbers announced by the American Gaming Association.

The AGA estimated the total amount legally wagered on Super Bowl XL at \$1.76 billion, up 26.6% from last year. Online sports betting remains outlawed in 19 states, including California and Texas, but has proved lucrative for states where it is legal.

Total state sales tax revenue from sports betting increased 382% from \$190 million in the third quarter of 2021, when data collection began, to \$917 million in the second quarter of 2025, according to the most recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau. State sales tax revenue across all states peaked in the first quarter of 2025 at \$992 million.

New Jersey became the first state to allow residents to bet on awards shows when it legalized it in 2019. Half a dozen states soon followed, including Indiana, Kansas and Massachusetts.

“Illinois has to be competitive and innovative, and entertainment betting must be responsibly regulated,” Feigenholtz said. “This legislation is a creative, common-sense proposal that taps into what Illinoisans love about entertainment while also generating economic benefits.”

If enacted, the provision would go into effect immediately. But it has a one-year sunset clause, so it would be repealed one year after the effective date unless it is renewed. The bill also includes a provision that the Illinois Gaming Board must adopt rules to permit wagering on awards shows within six months of the law being passed.

Illinois has several other viable bills related to sports wagering. The majority have to do with establishing a regulatory framework for wagering on fantasy sports, where users create virtual teams based on real-life athletes and success is determined based on statistical performance. These include House Bill 2342 and Senate Bills 238, 1224 and 2145.

Illinois is also mulling Senate Bill 2399, which would update the Sports Wagering Act to cap deposits to sports betting platforms at no more than five per individual in a 24-hour period and ban all deposits from credit cards. The bill addresses several issues critics have with the addictive nature of sports betting and with gambling generally.

Les Bernal, national director of Stop Predatory Gambling, told State Affairs that “there is no bigger contradiction today between our creed as a nation and our practice than the institution of predatory gambling.”

“The American people are on course to lose more than \$1 trillion of personal wealth over the next five years to forms of gambling promoted by states,” Bernal said. “That's \$300,000 every minute. Yet public officials from both parties act with the most flagrant hypocrisy when they talk about trying to make daily life more affordable for everyday Americans.”

He derided SB 2667 and any other bill that makes it easier to fall into the cycle of addiction. Some experts consider gambling, particularly virtual betting done on a phone, to be among the most destructive addictions because it is encouraged, seen as fun and can easily go unnoticed, unlike other destructive behaviors.

“Any proposal that actively encourages citizens to gamble on the outcome of awards shows like the Oscars will only make the life-changing gambling losses already being suffered by citizens even worse,” Bernal said.

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