**The Gaming Bill 2025: Legal Reforms Reshaping Nigeria’s Betting Industry**

**1.0 Introduction**

  The Nigeria's Gaming and Betting industry is changing speedily as, it is characterized by controversial sectoral regulations and an urgent need for legal and regulatory stability. The Supreme Court's decision to declare the National Lottery Act of 2005 unconstitutional in November 2024 was a major step in this direction. The nullification came after Lagos State and other Federation states sued the National Assembly in 2008, arguing that it lacked the authority to enact laws pertaining to lottery operations.

   The Gaming Bill 2025 holds the potential to reshape Nigeria's gaming landscape, fostering a more structured, accountable, and economically beneficial industry. This article however discusses: The key provisions in the bill,Enforcement and oversight on the bill, how it intends to safeguard the public, the revenue, investment and growth system, Gaming industry in other jurisdictions, implication for stakeholders and the recommendations concerning the gaming bill.

**2.0 Key provisions in the Gaming Bill, 2025**

* Unified Regulation: Creating a uniform set of rules governing all types of remote and online gaming across Nigeria's borders. The Supreme Court's ruling aims to address the problem of overregulation and overlapping legislation, but this will most likely, make things more comfortable for the current online gambling companies.
* Central Gaming Commission Establishment: The Bill suggests creating a central gaming commission to assume the duties of the current national lottery regulatory body. Among other things, the Commission would have the authority to oversee and manage the online and remote gaming industry in Nigeria. Additionally, the Commission will establish regulations, rules, guidelines, and standards for the nation's online and remote gaming industry.
* Certification of Online and Remote Gaming Technology: The Bill aims to govern the certification and authorization of gaming technology to be utilized in Nigeria.
* Regulations on Methods of Payment: The Bill prohibits specific payment methods in online gaming, requiring the use of cryptocurrency, gift vouchers, and gift cards. The Commission will need to determine acceptable payment methods as, it would impact provision of payment service in the Gaming industry. While block chain technology is recognized, cryptocurrencies are prohibited.
* Regulatory Agreement: The Bill gives the Commission the authority to negotiate with foreign governments and Nigerian state regulatory bodies. This will probably make it possible for the Commission to sign memorandums of understanding for the regulation of online gaming activities in the states where regulatory oversight is in place.
* Penalty Regime: The Bill stipulates a penalty regime for infractions, which includes fines, jail time, property confiscation, takedown orders, and more.
* Technical Manufacturers, Suppliers, and Vendors Certification Program: The Bill grants the Commission the authority to license or certify technical manufacturers, suppliers, and vendors of online gaming equipment, software, and services, extending its jurisdictional and regulatory powers to foreign operators.
* Transitional Provisions: The Bill aims to validate existing licenses issued by the National Lottery Regulatory Commission (NLRC) based on the current national license regime. If passed, NLRC licenses would be considered licensed operators for online business, but require state regulatory approval.

**3.0 Enforcement and Oversight on the Bill**

In Nigeria, the regulation of gambling is effective at both the national and state levels. The National Lottery Regulatory Commission (NLRC) regulates gambling at the national level, while at the state level, some states are regulated by a specific gaming board, authority or commission. Lagos state has the Lagos State Lotteries Board, Anambra has the Anambra State Gaming Board, and in less regulated states, gambling is overseen by the state’s internal revenue board. Notably, where there’s an intention in a person to provide mobile betting, there’s a requirement that he secures value added service licence from the Nigeria Communications Commission before applying for short codes.

In 2020, the Association of Nigerian Bookmakers took the NLRC to the Federal High Court, asking it to decide who has the right to regulate lotteries in Nigeria. The court initially ruled that the NLRC had the power, since lotteries are on the Exclusive Legislative List of the 1999 Constitution. However, the Supreme Court has since overturned that decision, ruling that lottery regulation is actually a matter for individual states, not the Federal Government.

In 2008, the Lagos State Government, joined by 21 other states, took the Federal Government to the Supreme Court in Attorney General of Lagos State & 21 Ors. v. Attorney General of the Federation & 16 Ors SC/1/2008, challenging federal control over the lottery and gaming sector. The Supreme Court held that lottery and gaming fall under the Residual List of the Constitution, meaning only state Houses of Assembly can legislate on the matter. Consequently, the National Lotteries Act was declared unconstitutional and now only applies within the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. In essence, the NLRC can no longer regulate or issue licences outside the FCT, and operators must now obtain licences from the relevant state authorities where they operate.

Abayomi Nurain Mumuni, CEO of MorRich Lottery Limited, has indicated support for the Central Gaming Bill 2025, supporting the Federal House of Representatives and asserting that state governments have no authority on the regulation of online gaming in Nigeria. Reacting to a newspaper article signed by members of the Federation of State Gaming Regulators (FSGR), who vehemently disapprove the bill, Mumuni emphasized that the online space falls under federal jurisdiction and not state control. He cited the Exclusive Legislative List of the 1999 Constitution, which grants the Federal Government authority over internet and telecommunications-related matters. What the proposed bill, sponsored by Deputy Speaker Benjamin Kalu and six others, seeks to create is a consolidated regulatory framework for online and remote gaming across state borders and internationally. Further, Mumuni indicated that the Supreme Court’s ruling in AG Lagos & Ors v. AG Federation & Anor (SC/1/2008) clearly did not address online or remote gaming, making the FSGR’s claim that the bill contradicts the judgment erroneous. He called the FSGR’s publication inaccurate and reaffirmed his backing for a federal approach to online gaming regulation.

**4.0 Safeguarding the Public: Youth, Addiction, and Protection**

Over the past seven years, Nigeria has faced a severe economic crisis impacting nearly every sector and drastically reducing living standards, especially for the middle and lower classes. As businesses collapse and inflation soars, many Nigerians, particularly young people, are turning to risky means of survival. One such trend is the growing reliance on gambling. Despite the conspicuous negative impact of gambling on individuals’ financial, social, and mental wellbeing, it is increasingly seen as a normal recreational activity. It has become inserted in mainstream culture, through sports, entertainment, and tourism, and continues to generate vital revenue for both government and private businesses.

In recent years, gambling, especially the aspect of online sports betting has become a popular pastime and source of income for many Nigerian youths. According to Aguocha and George, online sports betting, the lottery, and slot machines are the most common forms of gambling in Nigeria today. Many see it as harmless fun, yet a research has shown that 36% of adults had gambled, with over half of them doing so daily. Across the globe, gambling is now one of the most common risky behaviors among young people, who make up 18% of the world’s population, with most living in developing countries. Many are simply trying to find their path and plan for the future, but gambling often becomes a dangerous detour.

Legal and Illegal Gambling

Some laws distinguish between games of skill (which are legal) and games of chance (which are illegal), Legal forms of gambling include the lottery, land-based casinos and sports betting, whereas roulette, dice games and non-skilled card games are considered illegal. Until now, there seems to be no specific provision in the law to regulate online gambling which has given young people unrestricted access to gambling websites leading to compulsive behaviour towards the act which is referred to as gambling addiction.

Gambling addiction otherwise known as problem gambling, ludomania, or ludopathy is a compelling impulse to gamble despite harmful consequences. Like drug addiction, it triggers the brain’s reward system, releasing dopamine and creating feelings of pleasure and excitement. Eventually, some individuals lose control completely, continuing to gamble despite heavy losses and damage to their personal lives. While not everyone who gambles develops an addiction, some people become compulsive gamblers, unable to stop even when it’s clearly harmful.

Some of the signs and symptoms of gambling addiction are preoccupation, tolerance, withdrawal, escape, lying, loss of control, illegal acts, risked significant relationships and so on. Some of the reasons youths engage in gambling are peer pressure, Get Quick Rich Syndrome, environmental influence are poor economy.  Gambling addiction is not a healthy behaviour both to the individual addict and people around home thus, has negative effects on the individual's economic, social, psychological and general wellbeing. Some of the obvious negative effects that comes with excess gambling include relationship problems, financial problems, legal problems or imprisonment, poor work performance or job loss, poor general health, mental health issues, emotional problems.

**5.0 Global Standards, Local Realities and Jurisdictional Debates**

It is essential to understand the gaming system in different jurisdictions. The internet gaming system is referred to as, Igaming. IGaming is legal in various countries, however, each country set its own regulations and licensing requirements.

Below is the consideration of the IGaming in United States of America and United Kingdom.

**Understanding the Complex Landscape of US Gambling Regulations**

The regulation of gambling in the United States operates within a complex framework of federal, state, and local laws. While federal law establishes the overarching framework, each state holds the authority to regulate or not certain aspects of gambling within its borders. This decentralized approach has led to a diverse range of laws and regulations governing gambling activities across the country.

Over the years, several state governments have benefited significantly from gambling-related revenue, generating billions of dollars through casinos, sportsbooks, and lotteries. States like Nevada and New Jersey have been at the forefront of this industry, where gambling is a key pillar of their economies. These states have used gambling revenue to fund public services and create thousands of jobs, further reinforcing its importance to their economic structures.

A key aspect of state control is the legalization of online gambling operations. States have the power to decide whether or not to allow various forms of online gambling or iGaming. However, laws related to online gambling differ significantly from state to state, creating a fragmented legal landscape. For example, some states fully permit online casino games, including poker, while others impose strict regulations or outright bans on certain forms of gambling.

The varying nature of state laws on gambling is reflected in several key areas:

* Types of games allowed
* Geolocation restrictions
* Payment processing platforms
* Licensing requirements for operators

One of the significant challenges presented by these diverse regulations is the difficulty it creates for online gambling platforms in processing payments. When a transaction is deemed illegal under state or federal law, online casinos are unable to process payments, significantly hindering the flow of funds. In 2006, the federal government introduced the Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act (UIGEA), aiming to curb online gambling activities. While the UIGEA did not outright ban online gambling, it imposed financial restrictions, making it more challenging for online casinos to collect payments from players. Essentially, the act focused on severing the financial lifeline of online gambling sites by prohibiting the processing of payments deemed illegal under state or federal law.

Despite the limitations imposed by the UIGEA, the online gambling industry has continued to evolve, with state-level legalization efforts playing a key role in shaping the future of iGaming in the US.

The 2018 Supreme Court decision overturned Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act (PASPA), allowing states to legalize and regulate sports betting, creating a patchwork of regulations across the country, requiring operators to navigate these diverse regulations.

Some federal laws that regulates Igaming in US includes:

* The Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act (UIGEA) of 2006
* The Federal Wire Act of 1961
* The Interstate Horseracing Act (IHA) of 1978
* The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) of 1988
* The Illegal Gambling Business Act (IGBA) of 1970

**Understanding the UK’s iGaming Regulatory Landscape**

The gaming industry in the United Kingdom operates within a robust legal framework designed to ensure fairness, transparency, and consumer protection. Central to this framework is the **Gambling Act 2005**, which provides the legislative foundation for all gambling activities, particularly those involving betting and games of chance.

Oversight and enforcement of these laws fall under the authority of the **UK Gambling Commission (UKGC)**. As the primary regulatory body, the UKGC is responsible for issuing licences to operators and ensuring compliance with strict standards relating to fair play, anti-money laundering (AML), and consumer safety. The Commission has broad powers to investigate breaches, issue fines, impose sanctions, or revoke licences in cases of non-compliance.

A key element of the UK's regulatory approach is its strong emphasis on **responsible gambling**. Operators must implement robust customer protection measures, including advanced age and identity verification, self-exclusion tools, and options for players to set spending limits. These requirements are designed to safeguard vulnerable individuals and prevent underage gambling.

To legally offer gambling services in the UK, iGaming operators must comply with several critical regulations:

* **Licensing**: Operators must obtain and maintain a valid licence from the UK Gambling Commission.
* **Protection**: Comprehensive age and ID verification processes are mandatory to prevent access by minors.
* **Responsibility**: Operators are required to promote responsible gambling through support tools, customer education, and intervention mechanisms.
* **Advertising**: All marketing and promotional materials must adhere to the standards set by the **Advertising Standards Authority (ASA)**, ensuring they are not misleading or socially irresponsible.
* **Financial Compliance**: Operators must follow stringent AML regulations and report any suspicious betting activity to relevant authorities.

The UK Gambling Commission (UKGC) regulates iGaming in the UK, licensing and licensing operators to ensure fair, transparent operations, implementing stringent requirements like identity verification and Responsible Gaming initiatives.

To prevent criminal activity, the UK Gambling Commission launched a new 'Tell us something in confidence' service in December 2023.

The UKGC also enforces strict regulations, including regular audits, monitoring of advertising, and provision of tools for players to set deposit limits and self-exclude, ensuring a safe and fair iGaming environment.

**6.0 Conclusion**

The Gaming Bill 2025 represents a significant move in the legal and regulatory journey of Nigeria toward refining its gaming and betting industry. As the sector continues to enlarge, it becomes increasingly pertinent to strike a balance between innovation, regulation, and public welfare. While the Bill attempts to unify a fractured system and provide some level of clarity through central oversight, it also kindles important debates on federalism, digital jurisdiction, and state autonomy. Drawing from global styles like the UK and US, it is to be construed that successful gaming regulation rests on clear legal frameworks, fierce enforcement, consumer protection, and accountable gaming practices. As Nigeria steers this legislative crossroads, it is aimed that government, private operators, and civil society will form a confluence to create a fair, transparent, and inclusive system that not only improves economic development but also protects its most susceptible citizens.

ENDNOTES

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