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public policy geek
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Along with a number of other changes brought forth by President Barack Obama's administration, another one might be the re-legalization of online gambling -- particularly poker -- in the United States.

Online gambling in the U.S. was made much more difficult, though not technically illegal, in 2006 by the Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act (UIGEA), which made it unlawful for banks, credit card companies, and online payment processors such as PayPal to transfer funds from players to online gambling establishments.

While the law did not criminalize the playing of poker online, it made it more difficult for people to get their money online.

Representative Barney Frank, D-Massachusetts, attempted to bring forth legislation to overturn the ban in 2007, but was unable to do so because of conservatives who considered gambling not only [immoral](#), but perhaps even an issue of [national security](#). Because of the new administration -- led by a President who [plays poker himself](#) -- it is thought that the atmosphere now might be more amenable to a repeal.

It could also help the U.S. financial situation. In September, 2008, [PriceWaterhouseCoopers](#) estimated that legalizing online gambling in the U.S. could bring in up to \$52 billion in revenue to the government -- an increase of 22 percent over a similar study in 2007, due to increased interest in online gambling.

Conservatives are still concerned. The conservative thinktank [Heartland Institute](#) cites Tom McClusky, senior vice president of the Family Research Council, as saying that because online gambling is quicker and easier to do than going to a casino, the number of Internet gamblers would explode if the ban were lifted.

But even conservatives are starting to warm up to the idea, at least as a lesser evil. "Tom Bell, an expert in the gambling industry at the Cato Institute in Washington, DC, thinks the online gambling ban was completely ineffective and simply made online U.S. gambling companies unable to compete with foreign competitors," reports the Heartland Institute. "No government -- federal, state, or local -- should presume to deny fools the right to part with their money as they alone see fit," he said.

Other experts, however, such as Pat O'Brien, of the firm Greenberg Traurig, [reportedly](#) think repeal on a federal level is unlikely, and will more likely happen on a state-by-state basis.