



CALIFORNIA GAMBLING CONTROL COMMISSION
INDUSTRY MATTERS

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JANUARY - MARCH 2025

9 JAN **Commission Licensing Meeting**
23 JAN
 2399 Gateway Oaks Drive
 Sacramento, CA 95833
 Hearing Room 100
10:00 AM Livestream - cgcc.ca.gov

6 FEB **Commission Licensing Meeting**
20 FEB
 2399 Gateway Oaks Drive
 Sacramento, CA 95833
 Hearing Room 100
10:00 AM Livestream - cgcc.ca.gov

6 MAR **Commission Licensing Meeting**
20 MAR
 2399 Gateway Oaks Drive
 Sacramento, CA 95833
 Hearing Room 100
10:00 AM Livestream - cgcc.ca.gov

20 JAN **Office Closed for State Holidays**
17 FEB Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
31 MAR Presidents' Day
 Cesar Chavez Day

HOW ILLEGAL GAMBLING CAN AFFECT YOUR SUITABILITY FOR A GAMBLING LICENSE IN CALIFORNIA

With the expansion of the gambling industry in the United States, the Commission would like to remind applicants that sports wagering and online gambling are not legal in California.

[California Penal Code section 337a](#) prohibits sports wagering. The statute is broad enough to prohibit the conduct of placing a wager, as well as offering and accepting wagers on trials or contests of skill, which likely encompass all types of sporting events. Additionally, sports wagering websites are not authorized to operate in California and are not licensed or regulated by the state.

An applicant’s participation in illegal sports wagering may result in an applicant being denied for licensure, or having conditions placed on their license. [Business and Professions Code section 19857](#) states that no gambling license shall be issued unless the Commission is satisfied that the applicant has good character, honesty, and integrity; and is a person whose prior activities and habits do not pose a threat to the effective regulation of controlled gambling.

An applicant’s participation in sports wagering or online gambling in California may call into question their qualification for licensure. An applicant’s participation in sports wagering or other forms of unauthorized gambling is especially troubling because it may indicate a disregard for California gambling laws. Licensed gambling establishments and the people who work in them must adhere to the state’s gambling laws that ensure that gaming activities are free from criminal elements, conducted honestly and competitively, and in suitable locations.

Unregulated sports betting and online gambling in California are inimical to the public health, safety, welfare, and good order. ([Business and Professions Code section 19801\(d\)](#)). These unregulated gaming activities often offer no player protections, such as problem gambling support. In addition, since they are unregulated, they can and often do decline to pay out player winnings without recourse, since many are based overseas and there is no license for a regulatory body to take action against.

An applicant’s participation in sports wagering or online gambling, such as placing bets on websites like Bovada or others, is inherently incompatible with the qualification criteria in section 19857, and may result in the applicant being found unsuitable for licensure.

AS THE COMMISSION ENTERS A NEW ERA, COMMISSION STAFF CONTINUES ITS DEDICATION TO EXCELLENT PUBLIC SERVICE

By Lisa Wardall
Executive Director

2024 was a busy year for the Commission! This past year brought leadership changes, Commissioner changes, and a new [Strategic Plan](#). Throughout all the changes and challenges, Commission staff remained resilient and committed to excellence.

The Licensing Division filled its Deputy Director position in January with Bureau of Gambling Control veteran Brian Gilleland, and promoted longtime Licensing Division analyst Stephanie Clark to a newly established management position in May. Also in January, Commissioner Cathleen Galgiani vacated the Governmental Experience Commissioner seat, which led to the appointment of Executive Director Stacey Luna Baxter as Commissioner after eight years as the Executive Director – the longest Executive Director tenure in Commission history!

I joined this incredible team in May and continue to be in awe of the extremely knowledgeable and dedicated staff. The Commission is a small agency – we have 34 staff, and joining the Commission was like joining a new family – one which greeted me with open arms. Throughout all the leadership changes, staff have remained steadfast in their dedication to excellence.

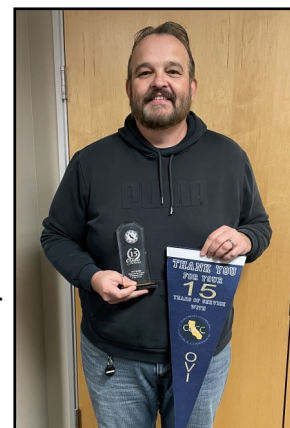
In January the Commission released a new, four-year [Strategic Plan](#), which has more than 50 projects spread out over the life of the plan. In 2024, Commission staff completed 12 of those projects, and started 17 more which will continue into 2025. Our stakeholders have seen some of these projects in action, including the [Stakeholder Survey](#), the [Education Packet](#), and even the updated newsletter format!

These projects are in addition to our regular workload, which in 2024 included conducting 50 public meetings (12 evidentiary hearings, 24 licensing meetings, 3 regulatory meetings, assisted with 6 Tribal Nation Grant Fund meetings, and facilitated 5 Gaming Policy Advisory Committee meetings). In addition, we processed approximately 7,500 license or finding of suitability requests.

Throughout my career I've come to realize it's not just what you do, but it's who you do it with that matters. More than half of our Commission team members have worked for the Commission for 10 years or more. The foundational knowledge that exists within the staff is incredible! In December, Ovi Bush and Russell Johnson were recognized for achieving 15 years of service with the Commission, and Tammy Helie was recognized for achieving 10 years of service with the Commission.

As I reflect on all that was accomplished in 2024, I am reminded how lucky I am to be a part of such a remarkable team. I am confident staff will continue to amaze me with their creativity, thoughtfulness, and dedication in 2025!

**No state funds were used for the purchasing of the awards presented.*



Top: Russell Johnson
Bottom: Ovi Bush

YOUR NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION: TO RENEW YOUR COMMISSION EMAIL SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Commission sent notices to all subscribers of the rulemaking and meeting agenda mailing lists, informing them that they need to renew their subscriptions to continue receiving notifications.

Please visit the Commission's website [here](#) to renew your rulemaking list subscription; and visit the website [here](#) to renew your meeting agenda list subscription. You must fill out all of the required information to ensure receipt of all future notifications. To ensure timely notifications, we encourage you to subscribe to receive information by electronic mail, as opposed to subscribing to the hard copy mailing list.

The Commission is required to update its mailing lists annually [[Govt. Code § 14911](#)]. The Commission utilizes these lists primarily to mail invitations to regulatory meetings and workshops, regulatory hearing notices, other rulemaking information, and meeting agendas.

COMMISSION STAKEHOLDER SURVEY OUT NOW!

As part of its [2024-2027 Strategic Plan](#), the Commission is continuing its 30-Second Stakeholder Surveys, which allow the Commission to receive valuable feedback from the public about the Commission's operations.

For the last survey of 2024, the Commission is gauging awareness of our Meetings page, which has meeting agendas, minutes, and audio recordings of the meetings. The survey can be taken online [here](#).

You can sign up to receive the 30-Second Stakeholder Surveys, as well as all other Commission Correspondence/Notices, on the Commission's website [here](#).

HEARING RESULTS

*(Decisions Effective
October 1 — December 31)*

Third-Party Worker License

[Emiliano Guerrero, denied
October 21](#)

[Natasha Johnson, denied
October 28](#)

[Hanh Thi Huynh, revoked
November 21](#)

Tribal Key Employee Finding of Suitability

[Nicole Brooks, approved
November 21](#)

[Phia Xiong, approved
November 21](#)

The Commission's website has an [FAQ page](#) for evidentiary hearings, the schedule of [upcoming hearings](#), and a record of all past evidentiary hearings and [decisions](#).

HAIL AND FAREWELL

The Commission wishes a very happy and relaxing second retirement to Daniel Bean! Daniel retired in October after five years as a Retired Annuitant in the Commission's Information Technology Unit, and with more than 30 years in state service. Congratulations Daniel!

The Commission wishes a fond farewell to Yasmin Dominguez of the Licensing Division. Yasmin joined the Commission in March 2020 in a limited-term position, which ended in December 2024.

The Commission also bids a fond farewell to Ian Coolbear. Ian joined the Commission in April 2024 as Deputy Director, Legislative and Regulatory Affairs Division, and departed the Commission in December 2024 to return to the legislature as Chief of Staff to Assemblymember David Tangipa. Congratulations Ian!

California Gambling Control Commission

Chair

Paula LaBrie

Commissioners

Stacey Luna Baxter

Eric Heins

William Liu

Edward Yee

Executive Director

Lisa Wardall

Chief Counsel

Jason Pope

Deputy Director, Legislative & Regulatory Affairs Division

Vacant

Deputy Director, Licensing Division

Brian Gilleland

Deputy Director, Operations Services Division

Alana Carter

Public Information Officer

Fred Castaño

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COMMISSION SENDS OUT EDUCATION PACKET TO LICENSEES: WHAT'S IN IT, AND WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

In November, the Commission sent out [Education Packets](#) to the representatives of every licensed cardroom and third-party provider of proposition players services (TPPPS) company in California, and to the Commission Correspondence email list. The Education Packet is a product of the [2024-2027 Strategic Plan](#), which encouraged the development of education initiatives to inform the public of the Commission's functions, roles, and responsibilities.

The materials in the packet cover a wide variety of information, with information applicable to different audiences. There's basic information about the Commission and the Department of Justice's Bureau of Gambling Control, which is more targeted to the general public, which may not be familiar with California's bifurcated regulatory structure.

There is also information for people in the gambling industry, especially initial applicants who are just learning about the industry, the regulators, and the licensing process. There is information on Who To Contact, the Licensing Process, Application Tips, Key Employee Licensee Responsibilities, Reduction and Expungement of Convictions, Obtaining a Replacement Badge, and Condition Compliance.

One of the most important goals of the Education Packet is that it gives our stakeholders, especially applicants, a better understanding of what the Commission does, how the regulatory structure operates, how the licensing process works, and the expectations the Commission has for its licensees. It addresses certain issues that can be the difference between having a license approved at a regular Commission meeting instead of going through the evidentiary process and facing potential license denial.

The Commission wholeheartedly believes that with this information going out to the Designated Agents and personnel staff at cardrooms and TPPPS companies to share with their applicants, there is potential for fewer evidentiary hearings, fewer license denials, fewer delays, and a more efficient licensing process for all parties involved.

The Education Packet will be a living document, hosted on the Commission's website, that will be updated as the Commission creates additional educational materials, and to reflect any changes to laws and regulations. The Commission also encourages its stakeholders to submit ideas for additional educational materials. If you would like to submit an idea for a flyer or infographic, please contact Public Information Officer Fred Castaño at fcastano@cgcc.ca.gov.

REGULATIONS UPDATE: MULTI-OWNER LICENSE RESPONSES RECEIVED; GPAC REVIEWS TRANSACTIONS REGULATIONS

Multi-Owner Type Licenses

In November, the Commission received stakeholder responses to an economic and fiscal impact survey regarding Multi-Owner Type Licenses. Commission staff is currently reviewing those responses as they develop the regulations package. In addition, the Commission and the Bureau of Gambling Control are developing their own cost impact studies.

Advertising

The Commission is finalizing the Initial Statement of Reasons and the fiscal and economic analysis for the Advertising regulations package, and will submit it to the Department of Finance for the initial 30-day pre-rulemaking review. Following the Department of Finance’s review period, the regulations will be noticed for the 45-day comment period. The Commission anticipates this comment period to commence in early 2025.

Approval of Transactions

On December 17, Commission staff presented the Transactions regulations package to the Gaming Policy Advisory Committee. Commission staff will review and incorporate the feedback provided and make additional edits to the draft text as necessary. Commission staff anticipates commencing the formal rulemaking process in mid-2025.

NEW GPAC MEMBERS APPOINTED

At the December 19 Commission Meeting, the Commission appointed the following members to the [Gaming Policy Advisory Committee](#):

Category C: Third-Party Provider of Proposition Player Services

Michael Hill, Qualified Player Services, LLC

Category D: Cardroom with 25 tables or more

Michael Koniski, Artichoke Joe’s Casino

Category E: Cardroom with less than 25 tables

Emmanuel Macalino, Stars Casino

Category G: Business/Accounting Member

Lenny Powell, Hopland Band of Pomo Indians

Category H: General Member of the Public

Linda Ng, H&R Block

COMMISSION HOLIDAY GIVING

For the past nine years, Alaina Lutz has coordinated the Commission’s holiday giving efforts to the [Sacramento Children’s Home](#), which provides services to over 7,000 children and 4,300 families each year.

This year, we are proud to report that Commission staff members collectively donated \$850, which Alaina smartly turned into \$890 worth of gift cards!

The Commission is proud to support the Sacramento Children’s Home, which provides crisis support for families with infants and toddlers, as well as short-term residential care to foster youth who have suffered trauma. SCH services focus on child abuse prevention, intervention, and mental health treatment for the area’s most at-risk children and families. Their programs promote child safety, positive parenting, education, and mental health, and improve the healthy functioning of families.