

OPINION

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Ohio is playing the odds

EDITORIAL

Club Keno, the closest thing yet to legalized casino gambling in Ohio, debuted a few weeks ago. It was introduced by Gov. Ted Strickland, who apparently had an epiphany after seeing a huge state budget deficit looming, along with an opportunity to generate an estimated \$73 million annually.

Strickland stood against the ill-fated "Learn and Earn" proposal floated by Ohio racetrack owners on the same 2006 ballot that put him in office. And, a year ago, he joined ill-fated Attorney General Marc Dann in a crack-down on cash-paying video gaming machines in clubs and bars.

For a guy who opposes gambling, Strickland certainly knows when the odds are in his, and the state's, favor. And it raises questions of just how much income Ohio is

losing as neighboring states expand gaming and market it to Ohio residents — people willing to spend \$4 a gallon to find it. While

Ohio prepares to collect its \$73 million, Pennsylvania last month marked \$1 billion in tax revenue from slot machines in less than two years.

Ohio voters may get another chance this November to allow casino gambling. But, like its predecessors, that proposal has its flaws, among them the fact that it would create just one gaming facility — in Clinton County.

Whether Club Keno is the answer to Strickland's needs remains to be seen. But with bigger, better gaming available close to Ohio, the odds may be in favor of state leaders presenting a broader and more comprehensive plan to keep such revenue closer to home.

PATS & PANS

PATS to school administrators, custodians, teachers and others who got classrooms ready; and to football teams and marching bands who are ready to kick off a new season this weekend.

PANS to drivers who will speed through school zones when classes resume next week.

QUOTABLE

"If you're a political junkie at all, you can't miss this one."

Ellen Ratner, bureau chief for the Talk Radio News Service and a Shaker Heights native, about next week's Democratic National Convention.