

Fantasy sports do not require regulation

Eric Schneiderman equates fantasy sports with gambling, even though the two activities differ hugely

New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman is taking daily fantasy sport sites, such as FanDuel and DraftKings, to court because according to him, they practice "illegal gambling." This is ridiculous. Let us acknowledge the fact that New York is truly becoming a nanny-state.

Many sports fanatics enjoy contributing to and playing year-long fantasy sports.

There is joy in reuniting with friends over a season-long competition, watching games together and arguing over whose team will triumph; it is a beloved tradition that has become a part of American sports culture.

But that is not the problem. The problem is that the government is attempting to regulate the way American citizens are spending their money. Government officials seem to be working toward including fantasy sports in the same category as gambling, even though the two activities distinctly differ from each other.

There is a very clear way that fantasy sports work. Daily fantasy sports sites do not require contributors or players to commit to a whole season.

Sports fanatics can draft players on game night, put money down for that single match, and then walk away with the hope that they have more money in their pockets than they had before the games started.

Schneiderman is trying to make the case in court that DFS constitutes "illegal gambling" because it does not involve skill, like season-long fantasy sports do.

In part he argues that DFS games rely mostly on luck, because they are dependent on many outside factors, such as player injuries

and inclement weather. Meanwhile, the sites argue that in addition to luck, you also need skill to win, so it should not be regarded as gambling.

Now backed into a corner, the sites have agreed to hold off on operations in New York State until their official court date in September.

This will result in huge monetary losses for the companies. With this decision, there are innumerable sports games that could be gambled on and could generate revenue from now to September. In case readers are not versed in sports, I can safely assume at the top of my head that there will be hundreds of different sports games from now to September, resulting in huge amounts of monetary losses in New York State for the companies.

This decision, however, not only impacts the companies. It impacts citizens as well.

With this direction, the government of New York State has sent the message that it does not trust its citizens to make their own decisions.

I have played DFS games before and I have lost small amounts of money. But I have also won small amounts of money, too. I knew the risk. I thought that I could win big, and I did not win as much as I had hoped to. What happened to letting people do what they wanted with their own money?

It is ludicrous for New York State to assume that a person who lost money through gambling would be an advocate of disassembling a whole company and a whole market.

Sure, for the sake of the argument, let us concede it actually is gambling. So what? One

works hard for that money, and one should be able to spend that money as one sees fit, as long as nobody gets hurt and no force is applied in the process. I did not know that the job of society or the job of government was to protect people from having safe fun that does not hurt anyone else. Since it is my money, I should also be given free reign to determine my own choices.

The government cannot tell me or anyone else what is good, fun or safe.

This decision on the part of Schneiderman was an attempt to control and tax citizens. Assemblyman J. Gary Pretlow, a Democrat representing the 89th district, is chairman of the Committee on Racing and Wagering, and has said legislators will move to legalize daily fantasy sports, but added that the legislation will also involve licensing and taxes.

Gambling is a voluntary action, and DFS games are voluntary contracts between groups of people and companies, who all know what they are getting into.

If someone has a gambling problem, the answer is not to ban gambling. People can be addicted to anything, including food, technology, sex, cigarettes, alcohol and, yes, gambling. And yet we do not ban food, technology, sex, cigarettes or alcohol just because there is a risk of addiction. Instead we prompt the individual to seek treatment for picking up the bad habit, not the opposite. And that should hold true for gambling, as well.

It is time we tell New York State to stop babying its citizens.

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