



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

William Larkin

Senate Passes Larkin Bill To Allow Free Bingo

William J. Larkin Jr.

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The New York State Senate has passed legislation sponsored by Senator Bill Larkin (R-C, Cornwall-on-Hudson) that would allow people to play bingo for free and without needing a license from the State Racing & Wagering Board or from local municipalities if the prizes are kept under \$10 dollars.

The bill (S.2939), said Senator Larkin, would allow more local groups to conduct bingo games that involve no or very small sums of money without needing to register with the state or locality. Under current law, any organization that holds bingo games must have a license. This blanket prohibition effectively makes bingo, even if it is free and played for purely recreational or entertainment purposes, an illegal activity if the group has no license.

"This bill would let seniors, for example, play bingo at senior citizen centers, apartment or condominium complexes, in private homes, at nursing homes, at social, charitable, educational, and recreational organizations, at hotel/motels, and even on busses that are rented for trips or social outings," said Senator Larkin. "The original law was designed to curtail the crime of serious gambling. It should not

apply to people who only want to play bingo for recreation."

According to the legislation, prizes per game must be limited to \$10 and no more than \$150 worth of all prizes can be given out each day. Players play for free and cannot pay to participate. In addition, the sponsoring organizations must not hold more than 15 free bingo events each year.

The bill was sent to the Assembly.