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# Sterling Heights bowling alley's poker room shut down by state

By Jameson Cook, The Macomb Daily

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A charitable poker room at a Sterling Heights bowling alley has been shut down due to suspected illegal gambling and falsifying records, according to state gaming officials.

The state, through an emergency order, suspended the license of Total G Services, which provided the gambling at 5 Star Lanes off Metropolitan Parkway east of Dequindre Road, the Michigan Gaming Control Board said in a press release Friday.

“Because of the ongoing illegal activity at this location, immediate action was necessary,” board Executive Rick Kalm said in the release.

The suspension is the fourth Macomb County and 20th Michigan poker room to close or be shut down since 2010, officials said.

The board suspended the license of “millionaire party” supplier of Total G and its owner, Fouad Haddad, because Haddad and his employees or agents routinely engaged in illegal gambling, Kalm said. Investigators discovered that Haddad and his employees routinely falsified gaming records and directed charities to also falsify records to deliberately under-report and hide revenues, Kalm said. Charities reported that they were pressure to loan chips to plays to deceive gaming authorities and maximize profits, Kalm said.

Haddad has been previously cited by the board for violations.

The investigation has revealed possible criminal offenses, Kalm said.

Haddad told The Macomb Daily early Saturday afternoon said he would comment after viewing the press release but has not responded.

Kalm said charitable organizations that use the poker rooms to generate revenue need to pay close attention to regulations and potential penalties for violating them.

“New proposed rules will hopefully increase charitable organizations’ involvement and raise awareness of their exposure when locations or their suppliers break the law,” Kalm said.

More than 70 poker rooms in Michigan over the past decade have hosted Texas Hold ‘Em games and millionaires parties/tournaments and blackjack tables, although the number has dropped to about 40, according to published reports. They are set up so the poker-room workers handle the cards at the table while volunteers from charities sell chips and cash them in when the players are done. Charity suppliers and game operators split the money that is not won by players. The operations must follow regulations, such as reporting revenue and conforming to chip limits.

Because the sites have turned into what one state official called “a racket,” a moratorium was placed on new poker rooms in 2011, and state lawmakers are considering tightening the rules.

Two of the other local poker rooms that have closed are Snooker's Poker Room in Utica and Cada's Poker and Sports Grill in Sterling Heights.

Cada's voluntarily shut down last winter amid an investigation into its liquor license. Police submitted a warrant request but no charges have been authorized.

In November, two top officials at Snookers' pleaded guilty to violating gambling laws and each were fined \$500. The license was suspended one year ago.

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