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Plan Your Plate, Plan Your Play: Michigan Gaming Control Board Calls for a Game Plan on Wagers Before Thanksgiving Kickoff

Five NFL games over three days open a holiday season packed with sports, and the state's gaming regulator says a plan made before the first whistle is the best play

DETROIT, Nov. 25, 2026 — Every Michigan family knows the moment: the plates are cleared, the second half is starting, and someone reaches for one more slice of pie they really didn't want. The Michigan Gaming Control Board (MGCB) is asking residents to bring that same instinct to their wagers this week — know your limit before you sit down, and know when to push back from the table.

The Detroit Lions have played on Thanksgiving Day since 1934, and this year they host the Chicago Bears at Ford Field at 1 p.m. Thursday. It is the centerpiece of the longest football holiday on record: five NFL games across three days, starting with the league's first-ever Thanksgiving Eve game Wednesday night and ending with Black Friday football.

"Thanksgiving in Michigan means family, food, and the Lions, and for many adults it now includes a friendly wager," said **Henry Williams, executive director of the Michigan Gaming Control Board**. "Nobody plans to eat until they're miserable, and nobody should bet that way either. Decide what you can afford to spend for entertainment before kickoff, stick to it, and when you hit that number, the game is still worth watching."

A long season, not a single game
Thanksgiving week is only the opening course. Between now and New Year's Day, Michiganders will see college conference championships, bowl games, the College Football Playoff, a Christmas Day NFL tripleheader, and full slates of basketball and hockey. The same weeks bring holiday shopping, travel, and year-end bills.

MGCB reminds residents that gambling is for entertainment only. It is not a way to make money, cover holiday expenses, or win back what was lost. A weekly budget, set once and kept across the whole season, is easier to honor than a fresh decision every game day.

A few ways to keep the season in check:

- **Set a season budget now**, not game by game, and count only money you would otherwise spend on entertainment.
- **Use the built-in tools.** Every licensed Michigan operator offers deposit limits, wager limits, time limits, and cool-off periods in account settings.
- **Don't chase losses**, and don't bet to fund gifts, travel, or bills.
- **Keep it adult.** Online gaming and sports betting in Michigan are limited to those 21 and older. Watch the game with the kids; keep the wagering to yourself.
- **Take a timeout.** If betting is making the game less fun, step away.

Check the list before you place a bet

Before downloading an app or funding an account, residents should check the list of authorized online casino gaming (iGaming) and internet sports betting providers on the MGCB website at Michigan.gov/MGCB.

Only licensed operators are required to follow Michigan law. That means verified age checks, secure handling of funds, responsible gaming tools, and honoring the state's self-exclusion program. Unlicensed offshore sites offer none of those protections, and players who use them have little recourse if winnings go unpaid.

That is the heart of the MGCB's "Play It Safe. Bet Legal." campaign, which the Board championed earlier this month alongside regulators worldwide during Illegal Gambling Awareness Week. The message carries straight into the holidays: if a site isn't on the MGCB list, don't play there.

Help is available any day of the year

For anyone who decides they need a break from gambling, MGCB offers free, confidential self-exclusion options:

- **Responsible Gaming Database (RGD):** Voluntarily exclude yourself from all Michigan-licensed online casino gaming, internet sports betting, or both, for one or five years.
- **Disassociated Persons List (DPL):** Exclude yourself from Detroit's three commercial casinos — MGM Grand Detroit, MotorCity Casino, and Hollywood Casino at Greektown.
- **Operator self-exclusion:** Licensed operators also offer their own exclusion and cool-off options in the responsible gaming or help sections of their sites and apps.
- **Blocking software:** Michigan residents can claim a free license for Gamban gambling-blocking software through the MGCB website.

Applications and details are available on the Responsible Gaming page at Michigan.gov/MGCB. Residents can also call 888-223-3044 to speak with an MGCB Responsible Gaming representative.

If gambling is causing problems for you or someone you love, call the 24-hour, confidential helpline at

1-800-GAMBLER. Additional tools and tips are available at DontRegretTheBet.org.

“The best holiday tradition is one you can keep coming back to,” Williams said. “If the fun has gone out of it, there is no shame in reaching out. Help is one phone call away, on Thanksgiving and every other day.”

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*Gambling in any form is for entertainment purposes only. If you or someone you know may have a gambling problem, call **1-800-GAMBLER**, chat online, or visit 800gambler.org. Help is available 24/7, free and confidential. Michigan residents can also visit the MGCB's Responsible Gaming page for information on self-exclusion programs, including the Disassociated Persons List and the Internet Gaming and Sports Betting Responsible Gaming Database. Through a partnership with Gamban, Michigan residents can claim a free license for Gamban's gambling blocking software — visit Michigan.gov/MGCB to learn more. Additional responsible gaming tools are available at DontRegretTheBet.org. The Michigan Gaming Control Board shall ensure the conduct of fair and honest gaming to protect the interests of Michigan citizens. Learn more at Michigan.gov/MGCB.*