

Senate Bill No. 480—Bingo in Baltimore County

AN ACT to repeal and re-enact, with amendments, Section 319B(a) of Article 27 of the Annotated Code of Maryland (1956 Supplement), title "Crimes and Punishments", sub-title "Gaming" adding political organizations to the organizations already allowed to operate bingo for the benefit of charity in Baltimore County.

April 15, 1957.

The Honorable Louis L. Goldstein
President, The Senate of Maryland
State House
Annapolis, Maryland

Dear Mr. President:

Senate Bill No. 480, enacted by the Maryland General Assembly of 1957, would authorize the licensing of political organizations or corporations in Baltimore County to operate games of bingo.

Presently, such licensing is authorized only for fraternal, religious, patriotic, educational and charitable organizations or corporations, volunteer fire companies and the Maryland State Fair and Agricultural Society.

As a legal safeguard, the descriptive "bona fide" appears in the law preceding the listing of the types of organizations which may be licensed to conduct bingo games.

It is not, of course, a difficult matter for the licensing authorities to distinguish between a bona fide fraternal organization and one which might better be described as mala fide. Such bona fide fraternal groups usually are well-established, well-known and often affiliated with State-wide, national or international organizations.

Bona fide patriotic organizations likewise are easily identifiable by their affiliations. A religious organization to whom a bingo license might be granted would have its bona fide status from its affiliation with or relation to a Church in the community. Educational organizations conducting bingo games undoubtedly would be doing so to help a school or accepted educational project. Bona fide charitable organizations would, I assume, be those which regularly have supported charities of known benefit to the public or a substantial section thereof.

It is difficult—indeed impossible—for me to classify the political organizations with this group.

What is a bona fide political organization or corporation in Baltimore County?

Certainly the Democratic State Central Committee for Baltimore County and the Republican State Central Committee for Baltimore County would qualify.

But those great official party governing bodies are charged with the serious work of conducting political campaigns, arranging party affairs between campaigns and assisting in promoting the success of our great two-party system of government.

I cannot conceive of their becoming licensees for the operation of bingo games.

If we eliminate them—as certainly we should—what have we left? There are, to be sure, many political clubs.