Riverboats cruise the Mississippi River

Advocate staff report

Many types of gambling are legal in Baton Rouge, from casino-style games at two riverboats to bingo and a statewide lottery. After controversy erupted over how gambling was legalized in Louisiana, the state Legislature in 1996 decided to put the fate of many forms of gambling in the hands of voters in each parish.

East Baton Rouge Parish voters opted to continue to allow riverboat casinos, but voted to eliminate video poker in bars, restaurants, truck stops and similar facilities.

Baton Rouge’s two riverboat casinos — Argosy and Casino Rouge — have been in business on the downtown riverfront since late 1994, offering such casino games as slot machines, blackjack, roulette, poker and craps tables.

Argosy docks at Catfish Town, near the Interstate 10 Mississippi River bridge. Casino Rouge docks near the state governmental complex at the north end of downtown.

Both have lounges and restaurants on shore.

Argosy has an extensive entertainment complex at Catfish Town in a collection of renovated warehouse buildings and is currently constructing a hotel downtown.

State law requires casino boats to cruise for at least 90 minutes during each three-hour period. However, cruising is at the captain's discretion and the boats have often stayed docked because of water or weather conditions.

Daily cruise schedules are available from the casinos, which are open seven days a week.

Horse racing, charitable bingo, a lottery and video poker are among other forms of gambling authorized in Louisiana.

Most of the various forms of gambling were approved between 1990 and 1992.

The Casino Rouge riverboat sits at its dock on the Mississippi River.

The exceptions are pari-mutuel wagering at horse tracks and bingo, which have been around for many years.

Here's a rundown on gambling in Louisiana:

- Casino gambling. The Legislature voted in 1992 to allow a single, land casino at the site of the city-owned Rivergate Convention Center in New Orleans.
- Horse tracks. There are four — Delta Downs in Vinton, Evangeline Downs in Lafayette, the Fairgrounds in New Orleans and Louisiana Downs in Bossier City.
- Off-track betting parlors also dot the state, including one in Port Allen, across the Mississippi river from Baton Rouge.
- The Louisiana Lottery. The lottery here is much the same as those in other states, with instant scratch-off tickets, weekly Pick 6 Lotto, a Pick 5 game drawn five times per week and daily Pick 3 game.

Louisiana also is part of multi-state Powerball lottery drawing.

- Video Poker. The electronic draw poker games are in bars, restaurants and similar establishments.

Players bet from 25 cents to $2 a hand for a chance to win a maximum jackpot of $500.

Under state law, establishments that serve liquor or beer on the premises can have up to three video poker terminals each.

Truck stops can have up to 50. There is no limit on the number allowed at race tracks and off-track betting parlors.

- Bingo. Nonprofit groups may sponsor bingo games here.