

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 06-0146R
(Resolution)**

Introduced by: Councilmembers Curran, Reisinger, Mitchell, Conaway, Welch, Spector
Introduced and read first time: February 27, 2006
Assigned to: Judiciary and Legislative Investigations Committee

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Request for State Legislation – Decriminalize “Friendly” Poker Games**

3 FOR the purpose of respectfully requesting that members of the Baltimore City Senate and House
4 Delegations to the 2006/2007 Maryland General Assembly introduce legislation to
5 decriminalize “friendly” poker games and provide a civil citation procedure for such
6 activities.

7 **Recitals**

8 Currently in Baltimore City, there is a criminal penalty for any and all gambling charges.
9 Everyday, friends get together and play cards, where there is no house earning money and no
10 business being run. In these situations, where money is being exchanged between friends, and
11 there is no casino or house involved, and no business making money off the gambling of the
12 individuals, there should be a civil remedy for the breakage of the law rather than a criminal one.
13 The idea that there is so much crime around us and that Police Department resources are already
14 being used to their limits, should be cause enough for these “friendly” poker games to be treated
15 as a civil matter, rather than a criminal one.

16 On November 4, 2005, the Baltimore City Police raided an illegal poker club and charged 80
17 people with illegal gambling. Most of the people involved were upstanding citizens who did not
18 even realize they were doing anything wrong. Even in this case, where the house was making
19 money off the gambling members, in the end, few were actually criminally convicted, and it
20 would seem that the raid was not the most productive use of Police Department Resources. With
21 the prevalence of poker games on television and in clubs in schools, poker has quickly become
22 one of America’s favorite pastimes. The need to keep this type of gambling on the criminal side
23 of the law is no longer justified. We need to focus our crime prevention on true criminal matters,
24 rather than those crimes that are being committed by law abiding citizens, which could be
25 diffused with an appropriate process of civil citation. The concept that organized gambling is
26 not legal is well understood, however, the idea that having a poker night in a private residence is
27 considered to be the same type of criminal matter as running a casino should be looked at and
28 altered. There should be a procedure of citation outside of the criminal realm for these types of
29 “friendly” gambling offenses.

30 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That this
31 Body respectfully requests that the members of the Baltimore City Senate and House

EXPLANATION: Underlining indicates matter added by amendment.
~~Strike out~~ indicates matter deleted by amendment.

1 Delegations to the 2006/2007 Maryland General Assembly introduce legislation to decriminalize
2 “friendly” poker games and provide a civil citation procedure for such activities.

3 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the
4 Honorable Chair and Members of the Baltimore City Senate and House Delegations to the
5 2006/2007 Maryland General Assembly, and the Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the Council.