

## Bingo Regulation

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### Issue

Provide a summary of bingo regulation in Connecticut.

### Summary

Beginning January 1, 2018, [PA 17-231](#) generally transfers the Department of Consumer Protection's (DCP) charitable gaming (i.e., bingo, bazaar, or raffle) permit, investigation, and oversight functions to the municipality where the games are conducted. But DCP retains regulatory authority over bingo product manufacturers and equipment dealers and raffle equipment dealers ([CGS § 7-169d](#)). Under the act, a "municipal official" is the municipality's chief of police or, if there is no police department, the chief executive officer.

In transferring the charitable gaming powers, the act (1) allows the municipalities to set the permit fees, but caps the amount, and (2) eliminates the administrative hearing process for violations involving these games. It instead allows anyone aggrieved by an order to appeal to Superior Court.

### Bingo

By law, "bingo" is a game where each player receives a card containing several rows and numbers and, as numbers are drawn or obtained by chance and announced, the player with the announced numbers on his or her card in a continuous straight line or covering a previously designated arrangement of numbers on the card is declared the winner ([CGS § 7-169\(a\)](#)).

The law prohibits bingo games from being promoted, operated, or played unless it is sponsored and conducted exclusively by an eligible organization. These organizations must have been organized for at least two years and be a charitable, civic, educational, fraternal, veterans', or religious organization, or volunteer fire department ([CGS § 7-169\(d\)](#)).

## **Registration and Permit Application**

As of January 1, 2018, an organization qualified to conduct bingo must register and obtain a permit from the municipality where the games will occur rather than from DCP. Certain organizations of people over age 60 and parent teacher associations or organizations (PTO) may continue to conduct bingo games for their members without a permit, though they must register with the municipality and keep accurate records of receipts and disbursements. Under prior law, PTOs wishing to conduct bingo games had to pay DCP a \$80 registration fee ([CGS § 7-169e](#)). [PA 17-231](#) instead allows the municipality to charge up to \$75 for the PTO registration fee.

A qualified organization must register with the municipal official on forms the official furnishes and obtain an identification number.

An organization's permit application must include, among other things, the applicant's registration identification number, name, and address; the location the bingo games are to be played with the seating capacity; the date or dates a permit is requested for; the class of permit sought; and any other information the municipal official reasonably requires to protect the public.

## **Permits**

By law, there are three classes of annual bingo permits, which determine the number and frequency of events. Class A permits allow games one day a week for between 15 and 40 games on such days, class B permits allow between 15 and 40 games per day for a maximum of 10 successive days, and class C permits allow games one day a month for between 15 and 40 games on such days ([CGS § 7-169\(f\)](#)). As under prior law, [PA 17-231](#) prohibits a municipality from granting more than two class B permits to one organization within any 12-month period.

Previously, qualified organizations wanting to conduct bingo games had to pay DCP the corresponding permit fee depending on the permit class. Table 1 shows prior law's bingo permit fees and the amount the municipality may charge under [PA 17-231](#).

**Table 1: Bingo Permit Fees**

	<i>Prior Law</i>	<i>Under the Act</i>
Permit Type	Permit Fee	Municipality may charge up to:
Class A	\$75	\$75
Class B	\$5 per day	\$10 per day
Class C	\$50	\$50

## Prizes

By law, bingo game prizes may consist of personal property or cash, merchandise, or lottery tickets, the value of which must be the purchase price printed on such tickets. With limited exceptions, permittees may only offer a prize of up to \$250 in value ([CGS § 7-169\(i\)](#)).

## Regulatory Fee and Records

Under prior law, anyone who conducted bingo games had to pay DCP 5% of the gross receipts, minus the prizes awarded ([CGS § 7-169\(j\)](#)). The commissioner would then pay the municipality 0.25% of the total money wagered less prizes awarded.

Under [PA 17-231](#), any organization operating a bingo game must file with the municipal official, within 10 days after the games are held or a timeframe set by the official, and pay the municipality 5% of the gross receipts, minus the prizes awarded.

The organization must keep accurate records of receipts and disbursements and make them available to the municipal official for inspection.

## Bingo Inspection

Under the act, when a municipal official believes a person is violating or is about to violate the bingo laws or has made a false statement on an application or report, the official may order that any permit issued be suspended or revoked and that the person cease and desist from such actions. Whenever the municipal official revokes a permit, he or she must not issue any permit to such permittee for one year after revocation.

## Appeals

[PA 17-231](#) eliminates the gaming administrative hearing process and instead requires anyone aggrieved by an order to appeal to the Superior Court where the municipality is located. Prior law required the DCP commissioner, after an investigation, to send notice to the suspected violator of

charitable gaming law or regulation. The hearing had to occur at least 30 days after the notice was mailed. The commissioner had to conduct the hearing and appeal in accordance with the Uniform Administrative Procedure Act ([CGS § 7-169\(k\)](#)).

## **Penalties**

By law, violating the bingo laws is a Class D misdemeanor, punishable by up to 30 days imprisonment, up to a \$250 fine, or both ([CGS § 7-169\(k\)\(5\)](#)).

Prior law allowed the DCP commissioner to suspend or revoke a permit or impose a civil penalty of up to \$200 for violations of the charitable gaming laws or false statements made on any charitable gaming permit application or on any report the commissioner required ([CGS § 7-169\(k\)\(3\)](#)). [PA 17-231](#) (1) transfers to the municipal official the authority to suspend and revoke a permit but not the authority to impose civil penalties and (2) allows the official to issue cease and desist orders for such violations or false statements.

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