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TRAILBLAZERS

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MATTHEW D. MCGILL GIBSON, DUNN & CRUTCHER



PIONEER SPIRIT It took Matthew McGill six years, three trips to the Third U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals and two appearances before the U.S. Supreme Court. But, finally, the high court endorsed McGill's argument that states should have the right to allow gambling on sports events. The court in 2018 said that a federal prohibition on the gaming conflicted with the concept of Federalism contained in the 10th Amendment. Now, "New Jersey and every other state in the Union can decide for themselves whether sports betting should be legal or not."

TRAILS BLAZED McGill, who co-founded Gibson Dunn's sports betting practice group, took the case at the request of then-New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, who was looking for ways to revitalize Atlantic City's casino industry after Hurricane Sandy devastated the New Jersey shore in 2012. McGill faced opposition from some sports leagues — most notably, the NCAA — that feared betting would corrupt their games. But "people have been betting on sports informally or illegally literally for decades, if not longer. ... Now the technology is so sophisticated that even minor changes in betting patterns can be immediately detected and acted upon by authorities. I think what we'll see is sports betting becomes safer and, frankly, more fun."

FUTURE EXPLORATIONS Now that 10 states have followed New Jersey's lead and legalized sports betting, McGill is helping industry players sort through regulatory issues. (It already was allowed in Nevada.) Large amounts of money are at stake; in just the first 12 months of legal betting in New Jersey, \$3 billion was wagered — more even than in Nevada. McGill thinks the potential for a big payday will create competition among gaming companies, Indian tribes and even governmental entities over who can operate sports betting. As the debate continues, "that may play out in litigation."