

Heller wants House to lead on poker legislation

By Karoun Demirjian, Las Vegas Sun

WASHINGTON — Ever since online poker legislation faltered and failed in late 2010, the prevailing wisdom has been that the road to successful passage leads through the Senate, via the collective efforts of Majority Leader Harry Reid and Republican Sens. Dean Heller and Jon Kyl.

But on Monday evening, Heller broke rank, informing Reid in a letter that “as discussed, it would be beneficial for the House of Representatives to first address this issue.”

His direction might sound like a simple scheduling switcheroo. But for the controversial poker bill, it is a potentially devastating change with ramifications that could undermine the Nevada economy — and, top Democrats charge, a clear indication that Heller dropped the ball.

“Several months ago Sen. Reid asked Sen. Heller to secure Republican votes to help pass an Internet poker bill and to date, Sen. Heller has not been able to secure any support,” said Reid spokeswoman Kristen Orthman. “Rather than standing to fight for this important issue for Nevada, Sen. Heller has decided to run for cover and attempt to lay blame on others.”

Reid leaned on Heller and Kyl, of Arizona, to come up with 15 Republican senators, according to Democrats, to complement the approximately 45 Democrats Reid has lined up to vote in favor of legislation to legalize playing poker online. It takes 60 votes in the Senate to supersede the threat of a filibuster.

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