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LASALLE COUNTY ILLEGAL GAMBLING OPERATION UNCOVERED

Chicago—Attorney General Lisa Madigan and Illinois Department of Revenue Director Brian Hamer today announced two Streator, Ill., individuals have been charged for operating an illegal gambling operation from which agents have seized more than \$146,000 in proceeds.

Richard A. Smith, 54, faces one count of gambling and one count of keeping a gambling place, and Julie A. Simmons, 46, faces four counts of gambling and one count of keeping a gambling place. All charges are Class A misdemeanors that carry a potential sentence of 364 days in jail and a \$2,500 fine.

In the course of an investigation, agents for the Illinois State Police, the Illinois Department of Revenue and the Illinois Liquor Commission uncovered evidence of gambling at Simmons' sports memorabilia store, Julie's Victory Lane at #7 Danny Drive, Suite #2, and at Smith's bar, Smitty's Tap, 502 E. Main St.

Undercover agents received illegal payouts for credits won on video slot and poker machines and also placed wagers on professional sports games at Julie's Victory Lane. During today's arrest, they seized more than \$24,000 in illegal gambling proceeds as well as 11 video poker and slot machines. The machines are licensed to Smith. At Smitty's Tap, agents today confiscated more than \$122,000 in proceeds on sporting events, including wagers placed at Smith's establishment on this year's Super Bowl.

"Following an undercover investigation, agents determined that employees were issuing illegal payments to players using machines that are for entertainment purposes only," Madigan said. "We take these cases seriously and will prosecute them to the full extent of the law."

"Illegal gambling is a problem the state takes seriously," said Hamer. "Today's actions are a good example of state officials working together to enforce the law."

Simmons was released on a \$5,000 bond. Smith was released on a \$1,000 bond. Both will appear in court on March 23.

Assistant Attorney General James Rustik is prosecuting the case for Madigan's Special Prosecutions Bureau.

The public is reminded that these are merely charges and that the defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.