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Legal Insight Vol. September 2025

Senate Rejects Casino-Entertainment Complex Bill, Citing Social and Economic Risks

In a decisive move, the Thai Senate has rejected the government's draft bill proposing the creation of integrated entertainment complexes that include casinos. The committee's report warned of severe long-term risks, including heightened vulnerability to money laundering, constitutional concerns, and a potential erosion of public trust in governance.

The Senate emphasized that any future attempt to legalize casinos must involve public participation through a national referendum. While some senators acknowledged the possibility of alternative models, such as entertainment complexes without casinos, limited-access gaming zones with strict controls, or regulated online gambling, the overall consensus was that the bill in its current form posed grave economic and social consequences. International examples, including Sydney's restricted-access casino system for tourists, were cited as possible frameworks if the matter were to be revisited.

The committee's rejection reflects a broader caution against casino legalization in Thailand, noting that projected economic gains from casino operations may be overstated. The report concluded that revenue from such complexes often represents a transfer of wealth rather than the creation of new economic value, while infrastructure costs and social burdens could outweigh potential benefits. For policymakers, the Senate's decision underscores the need for public consultation, transparent debate, and careful regulatory design should the issue of casino legalization re-emerge in future administrations.