



U.S. LOTTERY HISTORY ON DISPLAY IN MAINE

TRI-STATE LOTTERY CELEBRATES ITS PAST, LOOKS TO ITS FUTURE

Jim Acton, Lottery Industry Consultant

A little more normalcy returned to the lottery industry in early November. In Maine's famous coastal town of Kennebunkport, roughly a mile from the "Summer White House" of the two Bush presidents, representatives of the Tri-State Lotto Commission and the vendors who work with them gathered for the first time since Fall 2019. It was a time for reunions and a serious look at what lies ahead.

It is not hyperbole to say that these three small-population states, tucked in the northeast corner of the country, have had an oversized impact on the lottery industry. New Hampshire was the first lottery in the United States, starting as the NH Sweepstakes in 1964. Edward Powers, director of the New Hampshire Lottery from 1963-1978, was one of the founders of NASPL.

In 1984, the three states collaborated to launch Tri-State Megabucks. Seven years

before Powerball and 11 years before Mega Millions (first known as the "Big Game"), the nation's first multi-state consortium was formed. Three lottery directors, George "Skip" Jones in New Hampshire, Richard "Spike" Carey in Maine and George "Bud" Dacey in Vermont, created the new group to offer a game with larger jackpots which accrue from the increased liquidity/player-ship of the combined populations.

Fast forward 36 years and billions of dollars given away by subsequent multi-jurisdictional games, and the Tri-State Lotto Commission (as it is now known), is still going strong. Today's directors – Charlie McIntyre in New Hampshire, Gregg Mineo in Maine and Sabina Haskell in Vermont – welcomed lottery vendor representatives from throughout the country to the meeting in Maine. To say that everyone was happy to be together would be an understatement.

"These past 20 months have been difficult for everyone and we all have missed seeing in person, the people who make this

industry unique," said Charlie. "While Tri-State meets every other month, the two twice-annual larger meetings are unique opportunities for vendors to discuss larger trends and new products in the industry in an intimate setting. I think we're all glad to re-start these meetings."

At the November meeting, companies such as Scientific Games, Intralot and NeoPollard presented updates on the state of the industry as well as what products they are now offering. But the unique nature of the Tri-State meetings is that vendors such as Alchemy3, Bulletproof and EQL Games had the chance to meet with lottery representatives as well. If there is enough time in the day, the Tri-State Lotto Commission welcomes commercial partners of all sizes to join the group for open discussions.

"As this was my first large-group Tri-State meeting as Director, I was pleased at the collaboration and open discussion among lottery representatives and vendors," said Sabina Haskell, Vermont Lottery Director who took the lottery reins in April. "This

Back row: Directors - Gregg Mineo (ME), Charlie McIntyre (NH), Sabina Haskell (VT)

Front Row: Commissioners - Deborah Douglas (NH), Julie Sheehan (ME), Ed Flanagan (VT)

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our regional offices closed, we found that many players did not feel comfortable mailing in their winning tickets over \$600. Therefore, we accelerated the launch of Mobile Prize Cashing on our website and MyLotto Rewards app.

In addition to mobile cashing, which we limited to prizes up to \$5,000, we also launched an online prize claim form for high-tier prizes above \$5,000. These were the prizes that players were most hesitant to mail to us, and it provided them a secure and convenient alternative which has proven very popular.

Recently, we've enhanced our mobile app, MyLotto Rewards, to allow players to exchange their points for \$5 and \$10 of Lottery cash to be used in retail stores. Thus far, this initiative has been quite popular, and we are seeing approximately an 85-90% redemption rate.

We utilized our social media channels throughout the pandemic to interact with and engage our lottery players. In 2021, we hosted a 30-minute live event on Facebook to promote the PAC-MAN® Scratch-Off. The event was highly successful with nearly 5,000 viewers joining and participating for the entire event. As a result of that success, we are planning for two more live events in December to promote our holiday scratch-offs.

When the pandemic prohibited us from filming our weekly game show, Cash Explosion, with in-person contestants and a live audience, my staff and our studio partner had to develop a creative alternative to ensure we didn't lose our fan base. We came up with a "Play@Home" version of the show that allowed contestants to participate remotely via Zoom. The series developed its own unique charm by

featuring contestants surround by their family and friends with home-made signs and proved very popular with our fans. After a little over a year with the Play@Home series, we have recently returned to in-person play with a live audience but have incorporated some of the most popular features of the Play@Home shows into our game play.

We are entering a very interesting period for the lottery industry, as well as the broader games-of-chance industry. As we leverage our strengths – brand equity, enduring popularity of the games, massive retail network, etc. – we also want to stretch to innovate, modernize, and evolve with our players and the changing tastes and preferences of the consumers. ■

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is a unique organization, and the success of the Tri-State games is critical to the three lotteries. I'm pleased we could gather in person and work to move our initiatives forward.

The history of the Tri-State Lotto Commission really tells the story of the U.S. lottery industry. The Tri-State Lotto Compact became law on April 23, 1985, allowing northern New England to offer Tri-State Megabucks. By July of that year, prior to the game going on sale, subscription sales were offered in all three states. Players could call the Lottery and purchase a subscription for 26 drawings (six months) or 52 drawings (one year). The United Parcel Service then delivered confirmation cards of those purchases anywhere in the continental United States.

On September 3, 1985, Governor John S. Sununu purchased the first Tri-State Megabucks ticket at Rockingham Park in Salem, New Hampshire. For \$1, players chose six numbers from 1 to 30. Drawings were held once a week. First day ticket sales amounted to \$50,000. The first drawing for the game was held on September 14, 1985 with a jackpot of \$993,140. That

first Tri-State Megabucks jackpot was won by Richard Campbell of South Portland, Maine.

The game was an immediate hit as it offered larger-than-ever jackpots. To keep up with player demand, the game quickly evolved within six months to a larger matrix of six numbers chosen from a field of one to 36. The change certainly paid off, as on June 14, 1986 a \$9,628,000 jackpot was won by Bertha Arruda of Westport, Massachusetts.

In May 1990, Tri-State Megabucks increased drawings to two days a week, with a new drawing added on Wednesdays. In 1992, there were two jackpots of over \$10 million, which dramatically increased sales, and on January 25, 1995, the jackpot hit a record of \$16,400,000. Two players, one in Vermont and one in Maine, split that prize.

Over the years, the Tri-State Lotto Commission has added games to complement Megabucks – Pick 3 and Pick 4, Gimme 5 and Fast Play. Periodically, the group has included scratch tickets to its offerings.

At the meetings in Kennebunkport, where centuries of political and maritime history

is on display on every corner, the Tri-State Lotto Commissioner celebrated its storied past while working with its partners to make sure it remains relevant in the quickly-changing gaming world.

Meeting host Gregg Mineo, Director of the Maine Lottery, said that while multi-jurisdictional games like Powerball and Mega Millions get the headlines, the Tri-State Lotto games play critical revenue roles in each of the three states.

"The pandemic certainly provided lotteries with opportunities to review their entire portfolios and for us, that meant taking a close look at the Tri-State offerings," said Gregg. "Our group has survived for close to 40 years because our players like our games and made them a part of their lottery purchase options. Our responsibility as stewards of the organization is to continue to monitor play patterns and, when necessary, make strategic changes.

"Tri-State is an important part of the history of the U.S. Lottery industry. But most importantly, it is a reliable revenue generator for the people of Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont. That is where our greatest responsibility lies." ■