



GEORGIA Amusement JOURNAL

Dedicated to serving the Georgia COAM industry
Endorsed by the Georgia Amusement and Music Operators Association
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Patel to lead GAMOA

Industry group working to keep tax exemption

By Paul Tash

Georgia Amusement Journal

The Georgia Amusement and Music Operators Association (GAMOA) named Mehul "Mike" Patel as its new president at a membership meeting Oct. 1 in Duluth.

Patel replaces Shawn Fellows, who has led GAMOA since November 2016.

GAMOA members also discussed a current study by a joint committee of Georgia legislators evaluating the possibility of removing the current sales tax exemption that relates to the COAM industry.

The Georgia Supreme Court recently reviewed this exemption, unanimously upholding the interpretation of the exemption by the tax tribunal hearing officer, which the Fulton Superior Court and the

See GAMOA Page 6



Paul Tash photo

GAMOA EXECUTIVE BOARD members had fun during the association's social earlier this month at a Resorts World venue during the Global Gaming Expo in Las Vegas. From left are new

President Mehul "Mike" Patel, Treasurer Kyle Shepherd, former President Shawn Fellows, Vice President Salim Khambawala and Secretary Mark Brooks.

COAM regulator provides update

By Paul Tash

Georgia Amusement Journal

A thorough presentation by the COAM Division during the Southern Amusement & Entertainment Expo in late August highlighted COAM revenue numbers, new 2004 legislation, and tips for licensees to comply with COAM regulations and prevent machine manipulation.

Regarding revenues, COAM Vice President Mike Parham said, "they continue to increase every year." Two actions increased revenues in Fiscal Year 2024, which ended June 30, he added. Those actions were a legislative change that increased the Lottery's share of revenues to 13 percent from 10 percent, which raised about \$4 million in extra revenue, and the auction of a master license that netted \$3 million.

The industry's contribution to state education programs increased about \$8 million in Fiscal Year

See COAM Page 8



Paul Tash photo

MIKE PARHAM, COAM vice president, makes a point during a presentation at the Southern Amusement & Entertainment Expo in late August.



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SAEE at a glance



Paul Tash photos

THE SOUTHERN AMUSEMENT & Entertainment Expo, which took place in late August in Duluth, enjoyed its largest trade show ever. At left, GAMOA Executive Director Christina Kaiser, GAMOA board member Paul Patel, and Diamond Amusement's Terri Spivey pause for a photo after looking out at the trade show floor from above. Below, Jesse Springer, left, and Bill Knoll of Lucky Unicorn try on some Ivey Promotion swag as Nicole Ivey looks on, enjoying the enthusiasm. Bottom, Robert Aboujaoude and Joe Gumeny of Betson and Scott Hickman of Coin-Op Solutions discuss show specials offered by Betson.



THE BAD DOG GAMES booth was ready for business during the SAEE trade show with Bryant Jones, CEO Brian Cook and Hunter Booker (left to right).



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COAM calendar

Oct. 20: Gross retail receipts report for July, August and September due. The gross retail receipts must be submitted electronically through the COAM website at www.gacoam.com. Failure to report on time may result in penalties.

— MEETINGS/OTHER —

- Oct. 29:** COAM Advisory Board, GA Lottery headquarters, downtown Atlanta
- Nov. 6:** GAMOA membership meeting, Westin Atlanta Gwinnett, Duluth
- Jan. 14:** COAM Advisory Board, GA Lottery headquarters, downtown Atlanta



Paul Tash photos



LIGHT & WONDER enjoyed a busy booth at the Southern Amusement & Entertainment Expo. Above left, L&W's Josh Jacob shakes hands with Krupal Patel of Infinity Amusement as Betson's Rick Murphy and Mounang "Sunny" Desai of Double Day Arcade (seated) look on. Above, Jared Hale of IGT, Angela Whitman of Southern Gaming Solutions, and Nick Damani of the Ultra Group share a laugh at the IGT/Southern Gaming booth. At left, Jeff Connor of Lockdogs demonstrates the company's unique lock technology.

BELOW LEFT, Andrew Moseley of Peach State Distributing shows off one of the company's monitors. Below, Afshaad Patel provides some information on the popular Aristocrat cabinet to Scott Richards of Bluberi Gaming (center) and Altaf Popatiya of Four Square Amusement. Bottom left, Sardar Sarif of Skill Game Design is ready to launch some games in Georgia. Bottom right, Evgeny Bronnikov of Jenka Lab points out some highlights of another new game.



GAMOA

from Page 1

Georgia Court of Appeals had previously reversed.

Noting that the COAM industry pays the highest tax rate of any industry in Georgia, GAMOA is working to retain the exemption in the upcoming legislative session. The topic will come up again at GAMOA's next meeting scheduled for Nov. 6 at the Westin Atlanta Gwinnett in Duluth from 4-6 p.m.

In other business, master licensee Tim Case of Best Times led an effort to raise money to help those affected by Hurricane Helene that devastated many parts of the Southeast. GAMOA members during the meeting pledged almost \$19,000 toward the effort.

Joining Patel on the executive

board is Vice President Salim Khambawala, Treasurer Kyle Shepherd and Secretary Mark Brooks. GAMOA directors are Dawood "David" Kapasi, Vijay Kumar, Paul Patel, Sam Westgate, Arif Alibhoy, Tim Case, Alan Joseph, Ryan O'Donnell and Robert Aboujaoude.

Sponsors of the GAMOA meeting were Bad Dog Games, Banilla Games, Betson, Bravery Gaming, C3 Gaming, Innovative Technologies, Jenka Lab, JVL, Light & Wonder, Primero Games, Pyramid Technologies and Toccata Gaming.

GAMOA has worked diligently since its inception in 1982 to improve the business climate for the COAM industry in Georgia. One of the largest amusement and music associations in the country, GAMOA is a diverse organization working with Class A and B licenses throughout the state.



Paul Tash photo

GAMOA SPONSORED its annual social at the Global Gaming Expo in Las Vegas earlier this month at a Resorts World venue. Above, left to right, Tifani Chowdhry with IGT and Angela Whitman and Amber Carter with Southern Gaming Solutions take time to pose for a photograph while enjoying the social.

Aristocrat wins injunction over its Dragon Train game

A United States court on Sept. 23 granted a preliminary injunction against deployment of Light & Wonder's Dragon Train game, citing intellectual-property issues alleged by plaintiff Aristocrat Technologies.

U.S. District Court Judge Gloria M. Navarro barred Light & Wonder from "any continued or planned sale, leasing, or other commercialization of Dragon Train." The plaintiff said Navarro's

ruling shows that, due to a misappropriation of trade secrets, Light & Wonder had been "able to develop Dragon Train without investing the equivalent time and money."

"This ruling underscores the value of our intellectual property and reaffirms our commitment to protecting the integrity of our business," said Aristocrat Chief Product Officer Matthew Primmer. "We will continue to innovate and in-

vest in cutting-edge solutions, knowing that the law protects our creative efforts."

"We expect our strong growth trajectory to continue, notwithstanding this decision," replied Light & Wonder CEO Matt Wilson. His company stuck to 2025 cash-flow guidance of \$1.5 billion, adding that Dragon Train represented less than five percent of its projected 2024 cash flow of \$1.4 billion.





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COAM

from Page 1

2024, which ended June 30, to \$141.5 million, Parham said.

The number of COAMs in the market at the end of FY24 was 37,336, an increase of 3,050 from the year before, he said.

“Those numbers continue to grow,” he said. “It’s good to see. Keep putting those machines out there.”

Parham pointed to data that showed revenue routinely spikes from mid-February to mid-April. He suggested January and early February would be a good time to “make sure all your machines are up and running and available for customers” to prepare for that seasonal spike.

“Hopefully, we’ll see those numbers peak even higher,” he said.

Regarding COAM gift cards, Parham said that as of Aug. 11 about \$108 million had been loaded onto 390,700 gift cards in almost 3,000 locations. The average gift-card load was about \$272. He said about 133 Master License Holders (MLHs) have registered to participate in the program, though he added not all of them were actually providing the card.

“For those who have the card, use it,” he urged.

Parham also highlighted several enhancements to COAM law that House Bill 353 provided. Those include:

- Gift cards are now a legal form of redemption.
- On and before July 1, 2026, non-reloadable gift cards are permitted as a legal form of redemption for Class A and Class B machines, as well as any other legal form of redemption.
- On and after July 1, 2026, only replays, lottery products, and non-reloadable and reloadable gift cards shall be allowed as a legal form of redemption for Class A and Class B machines, as well as any other legal form of redemption.
- Class A machine prize limit increased from \$5 to \$50 (wholesale value).
- Application late fee reduced from \$1,000 to \$100 for Class A master and location licenses. “I’m glad to see that changed,” Parham noted. “It seems to be more fair.”
- 1099s will be provided to all ownership types and not just sole proprietors, partnerships and LLC partnerships (commission is \$600 or more).
- Class B master license auctions will be held once every three years and only for one license.
- Public auction now required for settlement of a proposed revocation or non-renewal notice that would involve the sale of the master license and its assets, including



Paul Tash photo

INTRALOT’S BILL AVGERIS responds to a question from an audience member during a presentation at the Southern Amusement & Entertainment Expo in late August.

location contracts.

- Any person may request official interpretation of any rule or regulation by GLC (in writing).
- There is no violation to use gift card for alcohol, tobacco and firearms (unless it involves the COAM gift card).
- The 50% rule does not apply

rather than monthly.

- All license types will have the option to apply for license periods of one, two or three years. Parham said 52 applications had been received for multi-year licenses as of Aug. 22.

Parham also provided some reminders for master licensees to maintain compliant and efficient operations, including decommissioning machines when necessary.

“Please, please, please properly decommission these machines,” he said. “If the store is closed and there’s no power, ... take the machines back

to your business, power them up and decommission them that way. Work with Intralot.”

He noted that a document on the Georgia COAM website at www.gacoam.com outlines the proper decommissioning process (see story on Page 9).

Also, Parham said, if an MLH has reported to Intralot that a site controller is not polling and has obtained a call tracking number, and Intralot has not responded by the deadline provided, they should contact Intralot and inquire about the open call tracking number.

“Ask about the status of that

call tracking number that they gave you,” he said. “Don’t have Intralot create another call tracking number for the same issue.”

Additionally, he said, MLHs shouldn’t enable unlawful conduct.

“If a location cannot lawfully operate, then the Master License Holder needs to evaluate the quality of the business as well as the number of COAMs on site,” he said.

Parham also reminded MLHs that they should:

- Ensure player card systems work correctly. COAM does not certify player card systems and will defer to the Central Accounting System for financial information.
- Monitor their email for “Not Responding” notifications from Intralot indicating machines are not polling.
- Respond to location and evaluate their equipment for functionality.
- Contact Intralot to report that a site controller is not polling or is reporting zero revenue despite play. “When the site controller isn’t reporting, you are not making money,” Parham said.
- Know that the COAM Division will periodically monitor all enabled locations with active COAMs.

Finally, he said, the COAM Division has noticed increased reports regarding the use of device and tools by people “attempting to manipulate COAMs.” He said fishing devices, unauthorized access keys, and Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP) jammer devices are still being utilized to steal from COAMs. Some actions licensees can take to prevent the manipulation of COAMs include:

- Using proprietary keys on all access points of the COAM.
 - Using the most current software version for bill acceptors.
 - Placing COAMs in areas that are visible by staff.
 - Installing security camera in the vicinity of COAMs.
 - Removing cash from COAMs daily and depositing it to a designated COAM account.
 - Greeting customers and watching activity in the business, especially around COAMs. “(Players) need to know the clerk is watching them,” Parham said.
 - Reporting any suspicious activity or thefts immediately to local authorities.
 - Integrating advanced technical support systems into player and gift card systems designed specifically for fraud detection and prevention.
- “These enhancements will help create a stronger defense against any potential fraud, ensuring a safe and secure player experience,” Parham said. “We have to stay ahead of the thieves.”



to historical fraternal and veteran organizations (locations legally exempt from taxes).

- Revenue distribution changes with GLC’s portion increased to 13% with the remainder split equally between Master and Location License Holders (43.5% each).
- Limited marketing is permitted from master licensees to location licensees (with contract) to include branded posters and signs, digital video signage, rugs, seating and removable partition walls and wall coverings.
- Gross business receipts reports are now required quarterly

Decommission COAMs correctly

The proper procedure to decommission coin-operated amusement machines (COAMs) can be found on the COAM Division website, www.gacoam.com. The COAM decommission procedure should be followed when there is:

- A change of master, change of ownership, or cancellation letter received by GLC;
- A COAM game board swapped out with a different game;
- A COAM malfunction.

To proceed with the decommissioning:

1. Call Intralot before disconnecting the COAMs from a location and removing those COAMs. The Master License Holder (MLH) needs to contact the Intralot Hotline at 877-261-6242 to properly decommission COAMs. The COAMs must be connected to the site controller at this time.

2. Intralot will let you know when the COAMs are decommissioned. The Intralot representative will perform steps on the Intralot system that prepares the COAMs for the decommission. Once the steps are complete, Intralot will notify the MLH the machines have been decommissioned.

3. Disconnect decommissioned COAMs from the site controller.

Decommissioned COAM(s) now can be removed from the location. It is imperative MLHs follow all operational and technical procedures in order to ensure accurate reporting of financial data to the Central Accounting System.

Connect, power up machines, GLC says

To ensure accurate reporting of financial data to the Central Accounting System, the Georgia Lottery Corporation (GLC) says it is imperative the Location License Holders (LLHs) ensure all equipment remains connected to the site controller and powered up at all times.

The GLC maintains a record of those LLHs that are repeat offenders of failing to ensure the continuous connectivity and operation of Class B COAMs.

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 Amusement Operator 10+ Employees \$500 GA MLH # _____

Amusement Operators Membership: (Class B or Class A & B Master License Holders)
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 Amusement Operator 21+ Decals (\$52/Decal) \$ _____ GA MLH # _____
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28-Jul-24	03-Aug-24	07-Aug-24	13-Aug-24
04-Aug-24	10-Aug-24	14-Aug-24	20-Aug-24
11-Aug-24	17-Aug-24	21-Aug-24	27-Aug-24
18-Aug-24	24-Aug-24	28-Aug-24	04-Sep-24*
25-Aug-24	31-Aug-24	04-Sep-24	10-Sep-24
01-Sep-24	07-Sep-24	11-Sep-24	17-Sep-24
08-Sep-24	14-Sep-24	18-Sep-24	24-Sep-24
15-Sep-24	21-Sep-24	25-Sep-24	01-Oct-24
22-Sep-24	28-Sep-24	02-Oct-24	08-Oct-24
29-Sep-24	05-Oct-24	09-Oct-24	16-Oct-24*
06-Oct-24	12-Oct-24	16-Oct-24	22-Oct-24
13-Oct-24	19-Oct-24	23-Oct-24	29-Oct-24
20-Oct-24	26-Oct-24	30-Oct-24	05-Nov-24
27-Oct-24	02-Nov-24	06-Nov-24	13-Nov-24*
03-Nov-24	09-Nov-24	13-Nov-24	19-Nov-24
10-Nov-24	16-Nov-24	20-Nov-24	27-Nov-24*
17-Nov-24	23-Nov-24	27-Nov-24	03-Dec-24
24-Nov-24	30-Nov-24	04-Dec-24	10-Dec-24
01-Dec-24	07-Dec-24	11-Dec-24	17-Dec-24
08-Dec-24	14-Dec-24	18-Dec-24	24-Dec-24
15-Dec-24	21-Dec-24	26-Dec-24*	02-Jan-25*
22-Dec-24	28-Dec-24	02-Jan-25*	08-Jan-25*

*Indicates sweep or push date has been changed to accommodate holiday
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Retail Matters

Health shift brings c-store opportunity

Danielle Romano

Convenience Store News

Today, one-third of food and beverage spending is focused on health-driven decisions.

According to new research from Circana, health-focused consumers account for \$638 billion in total food and beverage spending, split between \$363 billion in retail and \$275 billion in foodservice. This wellness-focused spending reflects a significant shift toward prioritizing physical, mental, and social well-being in food and beverage purchases.

"Consumers are looking for wellness across every aspect of their lives, and food and beverages are playing a critical role in this transformation," said Sally Lyons Wyatt, global executive vice president and chief advisor at Circana. "Our Complete Food & Beverage research shows that while the retail sector is excelling at meeting these needs, there is significant opportunity for foodservice providers to innovate and offer wellness-centered dining experiences."

Wellness trends are shaping consumer behavior in food and beverage across three key areas:

- Physical wellness takes center stage: Consumers are increasingly



seeking fresh, nutrient-dense foods that promote physical health. Retailers are responding by offering a variety of minimally processed products high in protein, fiber and natural ingredients. In contrast, wellness influences only 11% of foodservice meals, as dining out remains more focused on convenience and indulgence. However, certain categories like seafood, tea and juice are gaining traction among health-focused diners at foodservice operators.

- Mental health drives demand

for functional foods: Thirty-five percent of consumers view food as an important tool for managing stress and improving mood, driving increased interest in functional foods and beverages that support mental health. While retailers are capitalizing on this trend with expanded assortments of relaxation teas and mood-enhancing snacks, both retail and foodservice are providing treat-based indulgences, such as bakery items and candy, which are often go-to items for emotional well-being.

- Social engagement through "eatertainment": The rising trend of "eatertainment" is changing the way consumers experience dining, blending food with social interaction. This is particularly strong in foodservice, where chains are adapting to meet consumer demand for experiential dining. Retailers are also supporting social wellness by hosting community-driven events, helping consumers integrate physical health with social engagement.

As consumer demand for wellness grows, retailers and foodservice providers alike have an opportunity to innovate by expanding their offerings to better align with physical, mental and social well-being, Circana said. Retailers can continue to lead the charge with offerings across the food and beverage aisles that offer nutrient-dense options, while foodservice providers can capitalize on the growing demand for healthier dining experiences by offering functional foods and beverages alongside indulgent choices.

The key for all players is to provide accessible, transparent and affordable solutions that meet consumers' evolving needs for harmonized well-being.

This year's Cool New Products revealed at NACS Show

Convenience Store News

With the 2024 NACS Show in Las Vegas wrapped for the year, NACS announced the top products that piqued the interest of show attendees in the Cool New Products Preview Room.

This year, NACS found a range of foodservice and packaged food items especially stood out among vendor displays, with products ranging from customer-served frozen treats to grab-and-go snacks.

The final Top 10 Cool New Products from the 2024 NACS Show include:

1. Little Joe Novelty Automotive Air Fresheners from Ride Happy!, Little Joe – Drive Int. USA;
2. New products from Cigarbros USA Inc.;
3. New products from Reichel Foods;
4. Café Tango Espresso from Frazil;
5. CapriSun 12-ounce Resealable Bottle from KraftHeinz;
6. good2grow Chocolate Snackers from good2grow;

7. Wonder Sweet Snacks from Flower Bakeries;
8. Customized Drinkware from ET Products Inc.;
9. Flexeserve Zone Lite, Coun-

- tertop, from Flexeserve; and in a tie for the final slot,
10. Chamoy and Tajin Candy from Big Ideas Marketing and Sargento Shareables from Sargento

Foods Inc. (tied)

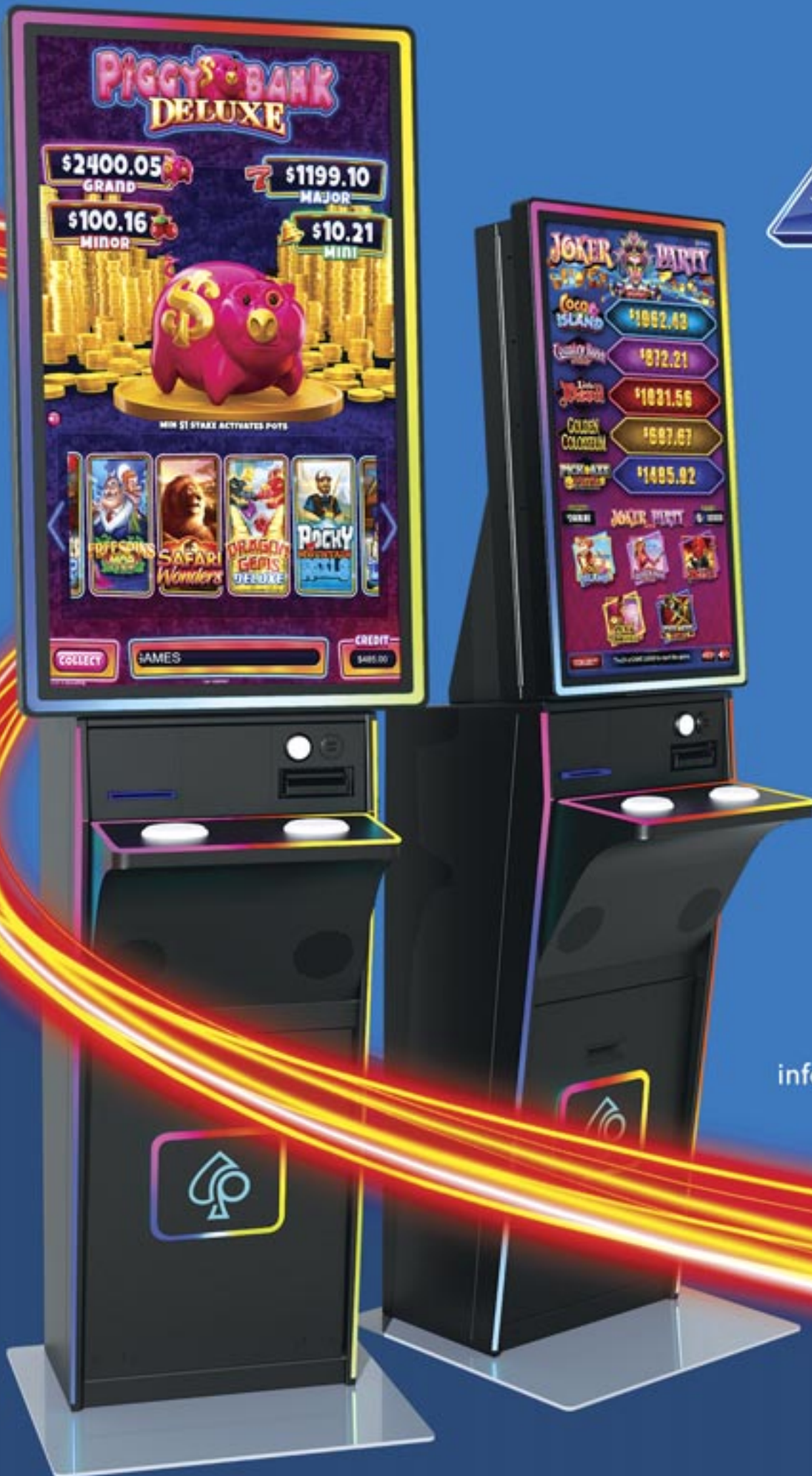
The next NACS Show will be hosted at the McCormick Place Convention Center Oct. 14-17, 2025, in Chicago.

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