



BY SUE MCNABB, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF IMGL

# International Masters of Gaming Law Regulators of the Year 2017

*Each autumn, International Masters of Gaming Law (IMGL) recognizes outstanding regulators based on stringent standards, including preeminence in the regulatory field and their noteworthy contributions to the overall body of regulatory work.*



**Regulator of the Year – North America**  
Ronnie Jones, Chairman  
Louisiana Gaming Control Board



**Co-Regulators of the Year – Indian Country**  
Terry Hale, Seminole Nation Gaming  
Agency Deputy Chief Gaming Regulator/  
Compliance Manager



**Co-Regulators of the Year – Indian Country**  
David Vialpando, Chairman  
Santa Ysabel Gaming Commission



**Regulator of the Year - Europe**  
Birgitte Sand, Director  
Danish Gambling Authority  
Past IAGR president 2014-2015

The regulators are selected from various jurisdictions internationally based on a rigorous nomination and review process. The categories are Europe, North America, South and Central America, Australasia, Indian Country, and Evolving Jurisdictions. A regulator is not necessarily chosen from each category in each year. They are selected only if they receive the required nomination and meet the demands of the review procedure.

The specific criteria for the selection process include that the overall body of work as a regulator be exceptional and that the regulator make contributions to the gaming industry as a whole while demonstrating noteworthy achievements in the regulation of the industry. The nominee must also provide a stable regulatory environment in the

jurisdiction, be identified as a person of high integrity, and demonstrate service to the community.

Through this annual selection process, IMGL continues its mission of “advancing gaming law through education” by selecting regulators who reflect a similar mission in their management style while serving as role models in the regulatory environment. This year’s recipients of the award for IMGL Regulator of the Year reflect these characteristics in their professional approach to the task of regulating a challenging and diverse gaming market. IMGL is proud to announce the Regulator of the Year, North America: Ronnie Jones, Chairman of the Louisiana Gaming Control Board; Birgitte Sand, Director of the Danish Gambling Authority, Regulator of the Year, Europe;

and David Vialpando, Chairman of the Iipay Nation of the Santa Ysabel Gaming Commission and Terry Hale, past Interim Chief Gaming Regulator of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma as co-recipients for Regulator of the Year, Indian Country.

IMGL has presented the awards since 2002. For a complete list of all past recipients, please visit our website at [imgl.org](http://imgl.org).

**Regulator of the Year – North America**  
**Ronnie Jones, Chairman**  
**Louisiana Gaming Control Board**  
Chairman of the Louisiana Gaming Control Board Ronnie Jones is the first recipient of the prestigious Regulator of the year award from Louisiana. Chairman Jones took up the reins of

Chairman following the unexpected death of Dale Hall in 2013. He states of his regulatory style, "I engage the industry in a very personal way by visiting properties and meeting regularly with property general managers. I am of the opinion that I cannot properly regulate an industry sitting behind my desk. Establishing an on-going dialogue and relationship with licensees serves both the state's interests and those of the industry. I firmly believe that if I create a fair, transparent and objective regulatory environment where licensees know what is expected the industry can prosper and the state is well protected."

Prior to being appointed as Chairman of the Louisiana board, Ronnie began work at Louisiana State Police where he served thirty-three years. He says of those years, "As legislative liaison for State Police I found myself navigating a difficult path between those who wanted gaming and those who were opposed to gaming. Thus I found myself at more than one committee meeting acknowledging that our agency had no position on whether or not gambling should be legalized but asserting that if it were ultimately approved, the industry would need appropriate oversight similar to what was in place in other jurisdictions.... wary legislators were insistent on State Police taking the regulatory lead."

Following those early years of gambling legalization, he remarks, "It was somewhat ironic that Governor Bobby Jindal appointed me in 2013 to my position as chairman inasmuch as I was an early and frequent critic of gaming in the nascent years."

Overcoming the financial challenges of an underfunded agency while at State Police, he has transformed that experience into a good common sense regulatory environment, where operators can be successful. Reiterating his regulatory philosophy, he says, "I realize that an oppressive regulatory environment can kill an industry. Gaming remains one of the most heavily regulated business sectors in the country and for good reason. But the threats and vulnerabilities inherent

in gaming have changed over time. Few would argue that the mature, main stream gaming industry of today is far different than it was a quarter century ago."

Ronnie has also successfully gathered some of the most powerful industry professionals to testify at hearings of his committee in an effort to make Louisiana a better gaming state. Although gaming in Louisiana started off rocky, under Ronnie's guidance, Louisiana is now considered a strong, stable, business friendly gaming market. Based on his many years of public service as a member of the State Police and his personal accomplishments as an adjunct professor, Chairman Ronnie Jones is indeed a worthy recipient of this award.

#### **Regulators of the Year – Indian Country**

**David Vialpando, Chairman Santa Ysabel Gaming Commission  
Director of Gaming Programs,  
OnCourse Learning**

**Terry Hale, Past Interim Chief Gaming Regulator of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma  
Seminole Nation Gaming Agency  
Deputy Chief Gaming Regulator/  
Compliance Manager.**

This year Indian Country was presented with two outstanding candidates that were equally deserving of selection based upon the Regulator of the Year criteria, particularly in regard to their contributions in enhancing the professionalism of tribal gaming regulatory authorities. As such, David Vialpando, Chairman of the Santa Ysabel Gaming Commission in California, and Terry Hale, past Interim Chief Gaming Regulator of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma, are recognized as Co-Regulators of the Year, Indian Country for 2017. Both exemplify the very best of tribal gaming regulation today, and each has been active in promoting best practices for tribal regulators as part of their participation and leadership in state and national tribal gaming regulators' associations.

#### **Terry Hale**

**Past Interim Chief Gaming Regulator of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma  
Seminole Nation Gaming Agency  
Deputy Chief Gaming Regulator/  
Compliance Manager.**

Terry Hale has worked for the Seminole Nation Gaming Agency since November 2007. Terry started in the Surveillance department as a Surveillance Operator where he worked for more than three years and he learned the National Indian Gaming Commission's (NIGC) Minimum Internal Control Standards (MICS), the Tribal Internal Control Standards (TICS), and the Gaming Operations, System of Internal Control Standards (SICS).

In 2011, Terry took his knowledge of all the regulations while in Surveillance and used them to further his experience in Compliance. While in Compliance, he learned every aspect of gaming machine software testing, gaming machine par sheets, understanding the difference between Class II and Class III gaming machines. He was a big part of the opening of the Seminole Nation Casino expansion in October 2012.

Terry was appointed the Deputy Chief Gaming Regulator in December 2015, and when the Chief Gaming Regulator was excused from his position in April 2016, Terry was named the Interim Chief Regulator during a period of time when the Nation faced more than 27 alleged violations, potential fines and closure. It was a dark time. The 28 member Seminole Nation General Council terminated the Commissioners and the Gaming Enterprises leadership and worked hard to address lingering problems. He worked tirelessly to address the areas of concern, rebut areas where the National Indian Gaming Commission had it wrong and brought the Nation's three casinos into full compliance. The casinos stayed open and the Nation paid no fines. The NIGC lifted the Notice of Violation (NOV) in December 2016. He helped disprove many purported violations with exemplary efforts under very difficult circumstances.

Of this time in his career, Terry states, “After I was the Interim Chief Regulator for only a month, the Seminole Nation was issued a NOV from the NIGC. I believe the Settlement Agreement with the NIGC and accomplishing that our Gaming Facilities stayed open with the help from the Gaming Agency and Gaming Enterprise staff has been my greatest achievement.”

Terry continues to strive to learn and share his knowledge with his peers to help the Seminole Nation Gaming Agency to always honor the past, protect the future and lead the nation to a better tomorrow.

When asked what advice he wishes to share with gaming attorneys, industry executives, educators and other regulators, Terry comments, “To always remember to keep your head up when times are rough. If you do not have the answer to a question, reach out to your peers; they may have the answer ready for you.” He further shares a final word to his gaming organization, “Always remember we all work for the same goal, to better our Tribe and the Tribal People. I am a proud member of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma.”

#### **David Vialpando, Chairman Santa Ysabel Gaming Commission**

David Vialpando, Chairman of the Iipay Nation of Santa Ysabel Gaming Commission and Director of Gaming Programs for OnCourse Learning, is committed to the highest standards of professionalism and integrity in the gaming regulatory field. In turn, he has been a strong advocate for respecting the professionalism and integrity of other tribal gaming agencies and their role as the primary regulators of Indian gaming under IGRA. Chairman Vialpando states, “Gaming regulators are the sentries guarding the integrity of gaming on behalf of the casino patron and protecting casino assets on behalf of tribal communities.”

David is well respected within the tribal gaming regulators and industry group and has led the way in crafting and promoting tribal regulations for new and innovative gaming products for tribal casinos. In particular, David has led the way in adopting “gold standard” regulations for licensing and classifying Class II gaming systems.

When asked what he feels is his most meaningful achievement as a regulator, David states, “My greatest achievement has been the friendships and network of dedicated, passionate professional colleagues I have amassed over the years, which represent the people I can count on for counsel and advice in providing the best service I can possibly provide to the Iipay Nation of Santa Ysabel and the community of tribal gaming regulators. The most honorable, selfless individuals in this country’s workforce can be found in the tribal gaming industry.”

Chairman Vialpando has past law enforcement experience on behalf of the State of California and also extensive experience in Indian gaming regulation as both a state agent and a tribal gaming regulator. This combination gives him a unique perspective on Indian gaming regulation issues and practices.

By also serving as Director of Gaming Programs for OnCourse Learning, Dave is helping OCL bring cutting-edge e-learning gaming courses to the industry. He believes that leveraging technology, such as digital surveillance analytics, digital employee onboarding, e-learning and compliance education, represents the future of gaming regulation.

#### **Regulator of the Year - Europe Birgitte Sand, Director Danish Gambling Authority Past IAGR president 2014-2015**

In 2008, Birgitte Sand was appointed to her current position as Director of the Danish Gambling Authority after being a long-standing member of the Executive Board of the National Tax Administration in Copenhagen. She began her career in the Danish Court of Taxation but has

since covered a wide range of different tasks and management positions in the Ministry of Taxation. Her experiences span from legal advice on corporate tax structures to the central IT department, and include projects regarding leadership, innovation, strategy, change of organizational structures and the development of a nationwide user-friendly IT solution for salary payments. She has been a long-standing member of the board coordinating the nationwide tax compliance projects.

Recently, Birgitte has been responsible for the successful implementation of a liberalisation of the Danish Gambling Market. The results show that the markets are now stable, highly compliant and well-functioning.

The Danish Gambling Authority is responsible for issuing licenses and supervising and controlling a wide range of gaming providers that stretch from land-based casinos to lotteries, gaming machines, charity lotteries, betting, online casino, public poker tournaments and horse racing. Of this position, she states, “I enjoy tremendously getting outside the regulatory comfort zone and being challenged by the industry presenting new products and new ways of operating that do not necessarily fit into any existing framework. I have the highest regard for jurisdictions that seek to create a framework where gambling can prosper in a legal manner and players at the same time experience a fair and transparent market.”

Since 2011 Birgitte has been a member of the International Association of Gaming Regulators Board of Trustees and served as President from October 2014 to October 2015. She is still serving as a trustee and as chair of the subcommittee for statistics.

Birgitte has over the years supported IMGL by attending and speaking at many IMGL conferences and is co-chair of the IMGL 2017 autumn conference in Copenhagen. [CGL](#)