

Poker domain names unfrozen to allow refunds

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US authorities said Wednesday they were unfreezing the domain names of two online poker companies targeted in a crackdown on Internet gambling so US players could withdraw their money.

The [domain names](#) of PokerStars, Full Tilt Poker and Absolute Poker, three of the largest online poker companies operating in the United States, were seized last week and 11 people, including the founders of the sites, were charged with bank fraud, money laundering, illegal gambling and other offenses.

The US Attorney for the Southern District of New York said Wednesday that the pokerstars.com and fulltiltpoker.com domain names were being restored to allow the sites to refund money deposited by US players.

"The government stands to enter the same agreement with Absolute Poker if it so chooses," the US Attorney's office said in a statement.

"This office expects the companies to return the money that US players entrusted to them, and we will work with the poker companies to facilitate the return of funds to players," the office said.

It said the two companies had agreed not to offer any gambling for "real money" to players located in the United States although they are free to offer online poker to players outside of the country.

While Internet gambling has been illegal in the United States since 2006,

online [poker](#) remains a multi-billion-dollar industry with companies using a variety of ways to flout the law, including locating their operations offshore.

US law prohibits US financial institutions from knowingly accepting payments for online gambling made through credit cards, electronic funds transfers and checks.

The US ban on [Internet gambling](#) has been challenged as an unfair trade restriction at the World Trade Organization and some US lawmakers are seeking to have online gambling legalized.

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