

# CHRISTIAN LIFE REPORT

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## Painful Lessons

by John Patterson

As a former Alabama governor, attorney general and Court of Criminal Appeals judge, I have followed with great interest the recent discussion regarding the legality of electronic bingo.

Let me say from the start, I have read the recent Supreme Court opinions and it is clear that the electronic games that play so-called electronic bingo are illegal based on the Supreme Court's rulings. And Gov. Riley is right to be shutting them down. Didn't we elect him and ask him to take an oath to uphold and enforce the laws of our state? He should be criticized if he didn't enforce the law by shutting them down.

Since it is clear that these games are illegal, we are now faced with the question of whether we should make slot machine gambling legal. You can call it electronic bingo or whatever you wish, but it is slot machine gambling plain and simple, so let's call it what it is.

I lived through a time years ago in Phenix City when I witnessed the same type of arguments being made about why this type of gambling was good and should be accepted by the community and state. It was illegal then, just as it is illegal now. I remember it well because my father, who was Alabama's attorney general-elect in 1954, was murdered for taking a stand against illegal gambling activity that was taking place in Alabama.

The man who shot my father, as my father was leaving his law office, was the chief deputy sheriff of Russell County. Standing with him as he shot my father was the local district attorney. These two, along with the attorney general of Alabama at that time, were indicted by the grand jury for first degree murder regarding the death of my father.

This is the type of influence big-time gambling can have on local leaders, including law enforcement, all the way to one of the state's most prominent elected officials.

The arguments being put out by the gambling industry today are the same ones we heard when I lived in Phenix City. The city fathers of Phenix City invited the gamblers to come to town in order to increase revenue instead of raising taxes and to help make payments on bond debt. Soon people were employed in the illegal casinos.

Then the argument for keeping gambling was that it would be wrong to close the casinos and put people out of work. The casino owners also gave money to charities and local politicians in order to gain their favor. They even said that gambling was good for the community because it would promote economic development. Does this sound familiar?

The gambling industry never tells you that with their enterprise there will be an increase in crime, bankrupt families, and that most of the money goes out of state. They never tell you that they will work to elect officials at the local and state level to get favorable laws and ordinances passed for them. The gambling bosses are not interested in just having a little bit of the pie, they want it all, and if they elect their people, they will get it all.

Today, it is slot machine bingo that they want, tomorrow it will be another form of gambling, and the same arguments will be made as to why it should be allowed. You can't do what the gambling interests want to do without corrupting public officials. With casino style gambling comes more problems and more vices for a community. They go hand in hand together.

From my years as governor, attorney general, as a judge on the Court of Criminal Appeals and as a citizen of this great state, I hope that I have gained some wisdom through my experiences. I can honestly tell you that no matter how shiny they make it look, or how good they make it sound, you do not want casino-style gambling in Alabama. You don't want Alabama to become the Las Vegas of the South, but that is exactly what the gambling interests want.

If the gambling interests are able to accomplish what they want, I believe that the citizens of Alabama will look back one day and say, "Why did we let this happen?" By that time, the Alabama we know will have been destroyed, and the gambling interests will be so strong that it will be too late to turn back.

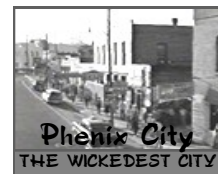
I have seen firsthand how gambling in Alabama destroyed the reputation and lives of many fine men and women in the community where I lived. Let's not let history repeat itself.

*(John Patterson served as governor of Alabama from 1959-1963)*

The Man for Attorney General



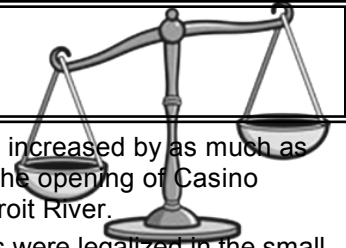
ALBERT L. PATTERSON



*The articles in this issue were gathered from various sources  
The opinions in the Christian Life Report are not necessarily the opinions of the Christian Life Commission*

# Weigh Human Costs

by Shawn Merithew



It is not often that I decide to ascend my soapbox to deal with issues that are being debated in the halls of our secular government. My first and greatest reason for this is that proclaiming salvation in Christ is the biblical method of changing society for the better. Although this is the primary way believers are to engage our culture, there is still value in letting our distinctively Christian voices be heard on moral issues that the Bible directly addresses.

That is why we should let our voices be heard on the issue of gambling. Gambling is an industry in America that victimizes families and poor people in the name of entertainment and tax revenue. It fosters an addiction based upon human greed where the promise of quick, abundant wealth is continually communicated and only very rarely fulfilled.

In fact, as it regards the particular issue here in Alabama, addiction counselors have called video slot machines the crack cocaine of the gambling industry because they are so addictive.

Gambling is bad economic policy. Gambling is a form of regressive taxation that is unaccountable to voters. Studies have shown that the poor and uneducated tend to gamble at a higher rate and with a much greater proportion of their income than the middle class, the rich, and the well-educated.

Studies have proven that when casinos open, other local businesses suffer and often close as both discretionary and necessary income is funneled into gaming and profits are sent out of state.

According to John Warren Kindt, in his statement before Congress in 1994, "For every one dollar of revenue generated by gambling, taxpayers lose three dollars in increased criminal justice costs, social welfare expenses, regulatory costs, and increased infrastructure expenditures." In the current economy, the ratio is closer to five dollars lost for every dollar of revenue.

Gambling increases crime. The Department of Justice and the National Institute for Justice have found significant links between gambling, crime and drug use.

A 2004 study by E. L. Grinols at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology found that counties with casinos had notably higher crime rates than non-casino counties. A University of Nebraska study by John Jejkal in 2000 concluded that problem gambling is as much a risk factor for domestic violence as alcohol abuse.

Gambling destroys homes and families and children. SMR Research Corp. has called gambling "the single fastest-growing driver of bankruptcy." Gambling-related

bankruptcies in metro Detroit increased by as much as 40-fold within 18 months of the opening of Casino Windsor, just across the Detroit River.

Three years after casinos were legalized in the small town of Deadwood, South Dakota, felony crimes had increased by 40 percent, child abuse had increased by 42 percent, and domestic violence assaults had risen 80 percent. In Indiana, a review of the state's gaming commission records revealed that 72 children were found abandoned on casino premises during a 14-month period.

Gambling ruins marriages and lives. In the National Gambling Impact Study, done at the University of Chicago in 1999, they found that the lifetime divorce rate for problem gamblers was 39.5 percent and for pathological gamblers it was 53.5 percent; for non-gamblers, it was only 18.2 percent.

Dr. Rachel Volberg, president of Gemini Research, has noted, "Suicide attempts among pathological gamblers are higher than for any other addiction and second only to suicide attempt rates among individuals with major affective disorders, schizophrenia, and a few major hereditary disorders."

It is these facts that many of our state legislators are ignoring as they push for this constitutional amendment in favor of gambling. I attended the public hearing at the State House on February 9, and I was honestly surprised at how little attention is being given to the human consequences of gambling as this matter is being recklessly forced upon the good people of Alabama. As evidenced by the facts above, when gambling is legalized in a community or state, an ever-growing tide of human wreckage ensues and the economic situation of the populace worsens.

I share the concern to bring jobs to our state in this down economy, but what service have we done to the people of Alabama if we knowingly increase crime, knowingly depress local businesses, and knowingly destroy thousands and thousands of families to gain a few hundred jobs?

It seems that our legislators simply don't care about their constituents. When it comes to counseling the addicts, mending the marriages, caring for the children, and helping the poor reassemble the pieces of their lives, it will be pastors like me who are left to clean up their mess.

Our politicians will be far removed from the wreckage, sitting in their ivory towers in the state capital, fighting over how to spend the revenue they have gleaned from ruined lives.

*(Merithew is pastor of Morningview Baptist Church in Montgomery)*

## ➤ CASINOS CREATE GAMBLING ADDICTS AT A SIGNIFICANT COST TO SOCIETY

- New casinos double gambling addiction within a 50 mile radius. (*National Gambling Impact Study Commission, June 18, 1999*)
- Every addicted gambler costs taxpayers between \$13,200 and \$35,000 for services ranging from court costs to treatment. (*Grinols, Earl L., "Cutting the Cards and Craps, right thinking about gambling economics." P. 14*)
- Almost 13 percent of pathological gamblers have mugged someone for money. (*US Department of Justice—"Gambling and Crime Among Arrestees," July 2004*)

## Are There Any Winners?

by Jeff Fuller

Driving along the road, minding my own business, listening to Rick and Bubba I am suddenly faced with the signs which proclaim "I'm A Winner..." then the amount is blazed across the top of their smiling picture. All of this is the size of an eighteen wheeler, so you can not miss it on the side of the road.

One proclaims "Martha" a \$100,000 winner, as she smiles for the camera. Another, there stands "Henry" with his cap cocked on his head and the numbers \$390,000. "Sandra" proclaims she won \$52,000 and "Pete" with his wrap around hairdo screams he won \$92,000.

Are they really winners? An article on the Internet, dated July 9, 2009, tells how lottery winners cannot stop losing. "Jack Whittaker can't seem to do anything but lose," the article says as it tells about the man who was a multimillion-dollar lottery winner. "The man who landed a \$315 million jackpot on Christmas Day seven years ago has since lost his wife to divorce, his granddaughter to drugs and now his daughter, found dead in her West Virginia home on July 5, according to the Charleston Daily Mail."

There is more. Whittaker was arrested for charges of drunk driving, was robbed of \$500,000 cash, and sued by the parents of a teenage friend of his granddaughter's who died of an overdose at his house. The suit was settled out of court.

The article quoted London's Daily Mail: "According to a health study...winners smoked and drank more after winning than they did before, countering the notion that more money means better health."

The question begs to be answered: "Are there any winners?" Martha, Henry, Sandra and Pete say they are winners for a grand total of \$634,000. But Whittaker speaks differently. In an interview with ABC News in 2007, he said, "Since I won the lottery, I think there is no control for greed. I think if you have something, there's always someone else who wants it. I wish I'd torn that ticket up."

These bingo machines in casinos around our state — illegally here — taunt the average person leading them to believe the lie they will be instantly rich. So these simple, hard working people sit down and shove quarter after quarter, dollar after dollar into the slot, pulling the handle in hopes of making something which will put their names and faces on roadside signs.

Or it may be the matronly grandmother who cooks cookies and smells of Ben-Gay. She takes her monthly check to the bank and cashes it and from her fixed income runs down to the local bingo parlor because she believes the money will go to the Veterans or Orphans. She sits down and puts her quarters in and pulls the levers

and punches the buttons in hopes of winning so she can help her granddaughter who is in medical school. Oh, she may get her picture on a roadside sign as well.

No, these are not the winners, they are the losers; pawns in the hands of a public relations campaign to make the gambling bosses more money. Charity Bingo is the going thing in some of the communities, purveying themselves as the great hope for helping the community. What they are not telling is they are able to bring in the money on these slot machines, but they only share a small percentage of the winnings with the charity; the house takes the majority. And when someone goes to VictoryLand or Greentrack, the majority of the money goes into the coffers of the owners, not the pockets of the poor, common working people or the fixed income senior adult who goes to make themselves some easy cash.

The winners are the owners and operators—the hog gets fatter and fatter. VictoryLand, the sixth largest casino in America, has 6,000 machines. If these machines take in an average of \$150 a day (gross), that would be \$900,000 a day or gross revenues of \$300 million plus a year. By the way, that money is free and clear of state demands because it is illegal to have possession or operate these types of machines in the state of Alabama.

Across the state it is said there are 16,000 total machines. That's gambling devices in a state which forbids gambling. Using the same math in the paragraph above, we can safely say these machines are bringing in an excess of \$1 billion each year.

Before some of you get on your soap box and say the state could be the winner if we made it legal, take a moment and look at what was recently proposed by a House sub-committee. The House Tourism and Travel Committee approved "a bill that would temporarily legalize electronic bingo games that were in operation as of December 1, 2009." This proposed bill, if enacted by the legislature, would give a \$72 million tax break in back taxes from Greentrack in Eutaw alone. It would also deny "countless millions from an undetermined number of illegal casinos." The state still loses.

No matter how you look at it, the winners are still and will always be the gambling bosses. Maybe this is the reason they are pushing the issue so hard.

Think Alabama! We lose if they win; simple and true.



*(Fuller is a member of the Christian Life Commission and pastor of Rockford Baptist Church)*

### ➤ CASINOS CORRUPT PUBLIC OFFICIALS AND THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

- Gambling has become the most powerful lobbying group in many states. (*Prof. Robert Goodman, Hampshire College*)
- Between 1992 and 1997, \$100 million was paid in lobbying fees and donations to state legislators by the casino industry. (*Prof. Earl Grinols, Baylor University*)
- The groups pushing to legalize Las Vegas style gambling in Alabama reported giving \$8.3 million to influence votes during the 2006 campaign cycle. (*The Birmingham News, July 5, 2009*)

# God's Odds on Gambling

by Jay Wolf

God's Word teaches us in Matthew 7:12 that we are to "treat others like we want to be treated." These days in Alabama there is a lot of talk about gambling. Some people say that playing a slot machine, betting on a dog race or buying a lottery ticket is just another form of harmless entertainment. Actually, sociological studies reveal that gambling has a dark side and a harmful hook buried in it.

The vast majority of people who gamble cannot afford their losses. One study entitled "Casinos, Crime and Community Cost in United States," analyzed over 3,000 counties in America that allow gambling. The study concluded that five years after gambling operations opened, robberies in those areas increased 136%. Aggravated assaults went up 91%. Homicides rose 78%. It was further determined that for every \$40 gained by taxes paid, **\$135 was lost because of the social cost of more crime, job dysfunction and family fractures.** So for every one dollar gained you loose THREE—that is an unfair rip-off!

The simple truth is that **gambling hurts people** and that violates the Golden Rule of Jesus. The gambling industry takes advantage of people who are bad at math and cannot afford their losses. The practice of gambling fundamentally violates the Golden Rule because it undermines a responsible work ethic and harmfully teaches that you might be lucky to get something for nothing. The gambling predators exploit needy people who are seduced into looking for hope from a slot machine. The "one armed bandit" is not a "Good Samaritan" but a destructive thief.

Here are God's Odds on gambling: If you are a serious follower of Jesus, then it is a sure bet that God expects you to follow His Golden Rule. You are called to treat others like you want to be treated and no one wants to be cheated and defeated.

(Wolf is pastor of First Baptist Church of Montgomery)

## FACTS & ISSUES

Compiled by Joe Bob Mizzell, Director

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### GAMBLING AND POLITICS

"...the glitter of Las Vegas has spread to nearly every state. The United States has the dubious distinction of harboring the most casinos in the world—705, counting the 216 listed by the National Indian Gaming Association and the 489 represented by the American Gaming Association, the Washington lobby groups respectively for Indian and "commercial" casinos. France, the number-two country, has fewer than 200." "...the gambling lobby has become a powerful force in national politics. Congressional and presidential candidates alone received \$28 million from gambling interests in the 2008 election cycle, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.

**Lance Tapley, 12/21/2009 "Do Casinos Cause Crime"**  
<http://thecrimereport.org/2009/12/21/do-casinos-cause-crime>



### NINE REASONS TO OPPOSE GAMBLING

1. Gambling corrupts politicians. Don't we have enough of these already?
2. Gambling imports and generates crime (stealing, embezzlement, robbery, etc.)
3. Gambling is not limited by legalization. Legalization contributes to its acceptance and growth.
4. Gambling is addictive to both people (12 million) and governments
5. Gambling does not benefit areas in the long run. Costs often exceed benefits
6. Gambling takes from the poor and gives to the rich.
7. Gambling adds to the number of people who need governmental and charitable aid.
8. Gambling destroys families. Innocent people (spouses, children, et.al) are hurt by it.
9. Gambling is a sin. Work is the divinely appointed way to provide for one's household (2 Thessalonians 3:6-12; 1 Timothy 5:8).

**Bob Wilkerson, Pinson - montgomeryadvertiser.com 3/25/10**



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