

**Testimony before the Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee  
Opposing SB 264**

**Monday, January 25<sup>th</sup>  
Georgia State Capitol**

By Mike Griffin, Public Affairs Representative, Georgia Baptist Mission Board

I understand that the purpose of this hearing is to provide the enabling legislation for a state constitutional amendment allowing pari-mutuel wagering on horse racing. I want to remind you that the Georgia Baptist Convention is consistent in registering its opposition to all forms of gambling legislation. Georgia Baptist Convention messengers went on record again in 2015, as they have done 21 times since 1963, opposing gambling in our state. The Convention has frequently stated its opposition to the gambling industry, and the devastating effects of gambling upon the moral and economic life of our nation.

The Bible indicates that man is to work creatively and use his possessions for the good of others (Eph. 4:28); gambling fosters a something-for-nothing attitude. The Bible calls for careful stewardship; gambling calls for reckless abandon. The Bible condemns covetousness and materialism (Matt. 6:24-34) – gambling has both at its heart. The Christian work ethic is damaged by gambling.

The aggressive actions by gambling interests in recent months make it abundantly clear their intention of seeking to expand legalized gambling in Georgia. Out-of-state corporations and businesses are poised to invest multi-millions of dollars in a bold effort to change state laws to allow pari-mutuel gambling and casinos.

And again, the usual arguments for increasing gambling continue to be "this will create jobs" and "it is for the children," because it will generate revenue for Pre-K and for the HOPE scholarship. These reasons fail to overcome the societal costs of gambling.

While proponents argue funds from things like the lottery will help our children, the real consideration is, "What are we actually teaching our children when we legalize gambling and demonstrate that it is okay to encourage people to throw their money away in hopes of exceedingly rare possibilities of winning?" Gambling as is a vice that preys on those who can least afford to throw their money away.

Creating jobs and raising funds for education is not the proper rationale for attempting to legalize more immoral behavior in our state. What are we going to end up calling these causes... "Horses for Hope? Will it one day be: Money from Marijuana or God forbid, even Pennies from Prostitutes?"

It's as if we've become totally sold on the idea that the end justifies the means. It is as if we've become convinced we can put money over morality and somehow morality will win out. When are we going to realize that using this kind of logic could justify any sin if that sin is perceived as a means for creating jobs and raising funds for education? Money simply cannot always be the bottom-line in legalizing vices in society.

Once the State of Georgia allows Class III gambling, this would open the door for all types of gambling. Also, once the gambling industry is allowed to operate legally in the state, its lobbying power will grow and increase its influence over legislators and local community officials.

Once again we are hearing the excuse of “let the people decide!” However, I would like to remind you that people have already decided to trust you with leadership that will not bow or bend to the big money interests of the gambling cartel. They will outspend any effort (a million to one) to defeat gambling opposition. It simply will not be a fair fight! The best bang for the people’s buck comes right here where you decide under the gold dome!

I implore you to not allow the same excuse that was used by Pilate in condemning the Lord Jesus to the cross. Pilate knew what he was doing was wrong, but condescended to the political pressure to take the easy way out by deciding to let the people decide!

These are some of the reasons we urge the Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee to have the moral courage to oppose the efforts by representatives of the lucrative gambling industry, who unashamedly seek to exert their influence in the political process with the proceeds of their nefarious profits.

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