

Hello.

My name is Glenn Murdock. I'm a former Alabama Supreme Court Justice and served on the appellate courts of this State for almost twenty years.

I grew up in Enterprise, Alabama, and my wife and I have raised our family in Birmingham.

Recently, I was asked what I thought about the proposed gambling legislation in Montgomery, and my answer was this:

... It would be a disaster. A complete disaster for Alabama and our families, and especially poor Alabamians.

Critics say that all the States around us have gambling, so we should too. But we're not those states. We're Alabama.

By most measures we're the most conservative State in the nation. A conservatism that flows from our traditional, Judeo-Christian values. The Barna polling company says that more people in Alabama per capita believe in scripture and attend church than any other State in the nation. And of course the scripture that informs the faith of so many Alabamians teaches us to "love our neighbor as ourselves" and that we are "our brother's keeper." And Christ's admonition that "as we do unto the least of these, we do unto Him."

But in gambling, for one man to win, another man must lose.

Unlike all other commercial endeavors, gambling is a zero sum game. No new products are created; no new services are created. Money is diverted from healthy retail spending. And just shifted from one person's pocket to another, always reduced by "the house" getting its cut.

The framers of Alabama's constitution understood this. They knew that gambling was not conducive to a wholesome culture and a healthy economy. Which is why they wrote an absolute prohibition against it into our Constitution.

But it's not just about the morality of gambling, or even its economics. It's about cold, hard politics. Gambling already is the proverbial "camel" with its "nose under the tent" in Montgomery. But if the kind of legislation that we've see recently were to pass, the billions of dollars that will be amassed and the power

that would be consolidated in the gambling interests will be breathtaking. It will control our State. It will control our politics. And ultimately, our policies.

That's not the Alabama I want for my children.

And one other thing. Gambling is about the only cultural issue left over which States can exercise meaningful control. Of course, under our federal system, States are supposed to have control over most every social issue. But think about it. Religious freedom, the definition of marriage, transgender issues, pornography, abortion. All these and others have been co-opted by the federal courts. But gambling remains.

And so it is that for the last two decades we have had courageous, conservative lawmakers who have gone to Montgomery and stood in the gap, and stood for traditional values and stood against gambling. Many of these fighting proudly year after year under the Republican banner against more liberal viewpoints.

Recently, however, some conservatives changed their position and voted in favor of a once-in-history bill that, overnight, would have changed Alabama from the most conservative, anti-gambling State in the nation to the most liberal, pro-gambling State in America. A bill that would have flung wide open the cultural gates of Alabama to every form of gambling conceivable. A lottery, electronic bingo parlors, sports betting. Full-fledged, Las Vegas-style casinos on Indian lands. And full-fledged, Las Vegas-style casinos with card games and roulette tables on non-Indian lands. A total of 10 such casinos in every city and corner of this State.

We might as well rename Alabama "Nevada East."

And shockingly, this bill came within two votes of passing.

Well now the die-hard gambling forces are back at it. With a lottery bill. And there are plans to amend this bill at the last minute to add back the casinos and all the other forms of gambling.

But even if this bill just remains a lottery bill. That is perhaps the most insidious of all forms of gambling. It certainly is no friend to those who are prone to gambling addiction. And those who want to open wide Alabama's doors to other forms of gambling certainly see it as a segue to that goal. In fact, many legal

experts question whether we can change our constitution to allow a lottery without opening our doors to all forms of gambling.

But the worst thing about a lottery is that it would be poor Alabamians who would pay the price – literally.

It's just a fact. Lottery tickets get sold disproportionately in poor neighborhoods. Where those who are most desperate, or fail to appreciate the odds, are sold a lie by the State. The government that is supposed to care for the least among us, will instead hold out a false hope just to pad its own coffers.

Speaking of those coffers, gambling interests have tried to drive public opinion with a false narrative that we must either accept gambling or increase taxes.

But make no mistake. If ever there was a time when we did not need gambling money to fund state services, it is now. A year ago, it was reported that Alabama had a \$271 million excess for our general fund. Of course, Covid hit and we got knocked back a little bit. But Alabama is now reopening and our tax revenues are roaring back. In fact, we're in the midst of an economic boon, with real growth from companies like Amazon and Facebook, Mazda and Toyota. And the Space Command in Huntsville. And on top of all of that, Alabama is about to receive Four Billion Dollars under the latest Covid relief bill from Congress. Four Billion, with a "B." If ever there was a time when Alabama did not need to resort to gambling, this is it.

Today, as we speak, Alabama is the greatest place in the world to live and to work and worship, and raise a family. But once a State embraces a gambling culture, it never goes back. The legislation being considered in Montgomery will forever change our politics, our culture, even our landscape. For our children and grandchildren. Forever.

Don't let them hand Alabama over to the gambling interests. No matter where you think your legislator may stand on this issue. No matter where he or she has stood on this issue in the past. Call them.

The role of elected leaders is to lead. Ask them to do that. And thank them for continuing to stand for traditional values. For conservative values. And for the Alabama we know and love.

Thank you.