



## Gov. Bentley's gambling advisory council extends deadline, hears from voters

By Maggie Walsh  
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Gov. Robert Bentley's Alabama Advisory Council on Gaming didn't deliver any recommendations to the Legislature by its original deadline of Jan. 31, but it has heard from various passionate representatives on both sides of the issue in its six meetings since Nov. 3.

At the Jan. 26 meeting, council member and Alabama Sheriffs Association Executive Director Bobby Timmons said, "If it's good enough for the other people, for Indians, it's good enough for the native Alabamians."

On the other side of the argument Joe Godfrey, executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program, said, "When government sponsors gambling lottery governs the state, making the state government prey upon its own people."

Ken Allen, director of missions for DeKalb Baptist Association, spoke against the harmful effects of gambling and shared stories of addiction he witnessed firsthand when living in Louisiana.

"How many stories will there be like that as we expand gambling?" he asked.

### Differing timelines

And Iva Williams, of Birmingham, urged the council to act sooner rather than later.

"You don't need a lot of time to make up your minds on this issue," Williams said. "Most of you already had your mind made up when you came here. ... We need additional revenue

in the state ... any level of gaming would be appreciated."

The council received a deadline extension from Bentley with a June date but council chairman and Alabama Baptist Clinton Carter said a report won't be that long in coming.

"Our plan is to put eight different options together," he said. "The options will range from no gambling at all to the status quo to (all forms) of gambling and will list the pros and cons of each option.

"We want to deliver a summary that is fair and balanced and move as quickly as we can but this is too important an issue to move too quickly," Carter said.

Timmons spoke against the council taking too much more time to report back to the Legislature, however, saying it would be procrastination.

"I pray we will do what we need to do before the Legislature dies," he said, advocating a statewide vote on the issue.

Council member Sen. Bobby Singleton, D-District 24, said he too is in favor of bringing a proposal up for statewide vote but agreed indepth research and presentations from the various experts on the issue have been important to educate the council members.

**The council has heard from representatives of the Department of Revenue, Poarch Band of Creek Indians, VictoryLand Gaming and Greyhound Park in Shorter, GreeneTrack in Eutaw, Alabama Policy Institute, Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute and Stop Predatory Gambling, among others.**

The council members — who seem to be about evenly split on those for and against expanding gambling in the state — did come in with their own opinions and some with specific agendas but all of that has been “on the table” as the group has done its work, Singleton said.

**Purpose of council**

The council was created to focus on evaluating state and local gambling laws (see story,

this page), tax revenues from existing illegal gambling operations in the state and tax revenue structures from gambling in other states.

While the council does its work, Bentley said it was “safe to say” there would be no raids on VictoryLand or GreeneTrack, where illegal electronic bingo gambling is going on currently.