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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Second in a SeriesLegalized Gambling:
A Financial Fiasco?

By Robert O'Brien

DALLAS (BP)--Wherever pro-gambling forces battle for legalization of gambling, they invariably claim that it will cure the economic ills of embattled state and community treasuries.

The pro-gambling refrain in state after state, such as in the pari-mutuel horse race betting issue Texans will face in a May 6 referendum, has told citizens that a vote for legalized gambling will turn on a dollar faucet to solve state money problems and ease taxes.

Forty-four states have legalized some form of gambling since 1963. What has the record proven about economic benefits?

"From a study sponsored by the U. S. government and supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation," said a recent "U. S. News & World Report" analysis, "comes a fresh--and surprising--appraisal of legalized gambling as it spreads through one state after another: states are not reaping the huge revenues expected from legalized gambling--nor are they cutting deeply into illegal gambling."

A "Wall Street Journal" report on April 13 declared: "That trend accelerates (toward legalized gambling) despite the fact that study after study over the past decade has found that publicly operated gambling just doesn't work out the way its proponents promise. 'It is axiomatic that the two principal goals of legalized gambling--revenue raising and crime control--are incompatible,' a high powered federal commission (Commission on the Review of the National Policy Toward Gambling) concluded in 1976 after a three-year study."

"Consumer Reports," with a national reputation for revealing consumer rip-offs, supports evidence from many quarters, including the Commission on the Review of the National Policy Toward Gambling, that legalized gambling amounts to a regressive form of taxation which exacts a penalty from those least able to pay, yields only a small percentage of state revenues, and short changes those who gamble.

Michigan State University economics professor, Daniel B. Suits, who has headed a major gambling study and consulted on the Commission on the Review of the National Policy Toward Gambling, also told "Business Week" magazine that "government (where gambling is legal) has become a pusher (in efforts to convince citizens to gamble their resources). And they're not pushing fire or police protection--only dreams."

No state except Nevada and New Hampshire, with about four percent each, derives more than one to two percent of state budget revenue from legalized gambling channels, according to "Consumer Reports" and other sources. That doesn't count the cost in social ills, law enforcement, state bureaucracies, and gambling revenue collection, according to many observers.

"The cost of getting the money (from gambling revenue) to the state treasury, "is excessive," says "Consumer Reports." "It costs 1.5 cents to 2 cents, on the average, to collect a dollar of tax revenue for the state treasuries. By contrast, lottery expenses in most states run from 25.6 cents to more than 40 cents per dollar reaching the state treasury...."

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Collaborating a "Business Week" conclusion that "legalized gambling is an inefficient and inequitable way to raise revenues, an analysis in "Consumer Reports," using state lotteries as an example, said:

"The two likeliest winners in a state lottery are the state's Republican and Democratic parties. Each new state lottery (as would pari-mutuel legalization) provides the occasion for setting up one or more state bureaucracies and for hiring additional bureaucrats, from commissioners not subject to civil service down to inspectors and office staffs...Lottery commissions are almost always bipartisan, so that the patronage the lottery generates is distributed through both parties."

As Texans face the pari-mutuel legalization issue, some have raised the question about revenues for Texas. Three surrounding states, Arkansas, Louisiana and New Mexico, provide a checkpoint.

Arkansas derives only 0.35 percent of its revenue from pari-mutuels; Louisiana, 0.27 percent; and New Mexico, 0.17 percent--not counting the cost to set up the bureaucratic machinery to run legalized gambling and law enforcement and social costs.

But many observers, from sociologists to law enforcement officials and economists, say the cost of legalized gambling, which federally funded studies have shown increases rather than decreases illegal betting and organized crime, goes further than just dollars and cents.

The Commission on the Review of the National Policy Toward Gambling, set up under the 1970 Organized Crime Control Act, says that governmental sanctioning of gambling may make "allegiance to government extremely difficult for people with deep moral convictions who are forced more and more to dissent from actions of their government."

The commission's voluminous report, "Gambling in America," supported by evidence from a variety of other sources, catalogues a list of ills related to gambling. They include undermining of the nation's work ethic in a something-for-nothing atmosphere, systematic corruption of police departments, creation of new gamblers and compulsive gamblers, eroding of the poor's income, little return on funds to state coffers, increased organized crime, and a number of other things.

"Our interest in gambling is not primarily with the money it yields," says Bettina Bien Graves of the Foundation for Economic Education. "But rather in the fact that when government resorts to gambling as a source of funds this is a symptom indicating that government has far exceeded its legitimate role of protecting life and property."

Unpaid bills, bankruptcy, embezzlement, employee pilferage, bad checks, and broken families often accompany illegal gambling, according to a number of sources, including "Dun's" of Dun and Bradstreet, Man and Manager, Inc., sociological studies, and others.

A Los Angeles department store manager added a personal perspective, reporting that during the racing season receipt of bad checks doubled, absenteeism increased and time payments decreased by 30 percent.

Florida Governor Reuben Askew, in opposing efforts for casino gambling in his state, has admitted that Florida "already crossed the bridge on the moral question of gambling" by allowing pari-mutuel and other forms of wagering.

"But that does not mean we have to further compound the situation," Askew declared. "Can a government build economic strength by catering to people's weaknesses? Should we try to build an economy based on exploiting those weaknesses? Is that the way to lead to a better society? The answer is clearly no."

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NOTE TO EDITORS: This is the second in a series on legalized gambling. A complete analysis of the legalized gambling dilemma will be run in the May 1978 "Home Missions" magazine and the August, 1978, issue of "World Mission Journal."

More Baptist Churches
Damaged in Georgia

By Judy Touchton

ACWORTH, Ga. (BP)--Two more Baptist churches burned in Georgia in April, bringing to 10 the total number of churches burned since last July 4.

Free Baptist Church in Cobb County burned to the ground. Another church, New Hope Baptist in Acworth, part of the Noonday Southern Baptist Association, escaped with damage to the basement, which had been newly decorated.

Firemen from Bartow and Cobb counties speculated that the two fires, reported within an hour and just a few miles of each other, were set by arsonists.

Last July three rural Baptist churches, one of which was Southern Baptist, burned in White and Hall counties. Another Baptist church near Woodstock, Ga., burned in August.

Obscene words had been scrawled on three of those churches.

Four small eastern Georgia churches with black congregations were destroyed by fire in December. Three white youths were charged with arson in those blazes.

Georgia Baptists recently helped rebuild the black churches in a cooperative effort culminating on Easter Sunday with steeple-raising at the Mulberry Baptist Church in Washington.

New Hope pastor Stanley Wilkins said services for the 250-member white congregation would continue. Sunday worship services on the morning after the fire were held outside, with the congregation asking God's forgiveness to those responsible for the fires.

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Issues Face Messengers
At Annual SBC Meeting

Baptist Press
4/24/78

ATLANTA (BP)--When Southern Baptists gather for the 121st annual session of the 133-year-old Southern Baptist Convention they will face an array of speakers, issues, and satellite meetings.

Latest addition to the main SBC meeting, June 13-15, at Atlanta's Georgia World Congress Center, is Ruth Graham of Montreat, N. C., wife of evangelist Billy Graham, who will speak on "The Family in Mission." She will appear on the Thursday night segment of the program, along with Quaker theologian D. Elton Trueblood, SBC President Jimmy R. Allen of San Antonio, Sarah Frances Anders, who chairs the sociology department at Louisiana College, and others who will explore "My Family in Bold Mission Thrust."

All three evening sessions will feature a wide range of program personalities, multi-media effects and music, built around the theme of "Let the Church Be Hold in Mission Thrust!"

More than 16,000 Southern Baptists are expected to register as "messengers" at the three-day meeting, which follows a battery of pre-convention sessions, beginning as early as June 11, and precedes an SBC Brotherhood Commission-sponsored National Conference of Baptist Men, June 16, at the Omni Coliseum featuring President Jimmy Carter.

Last year 16,271 persons registered as messengers for the SBC meeting in Kansas City, and a record 18,637 registered at the 1975 Norfolk convention. Total attendance this year will likely top 20,000.

Messengers, as usual, will field a variety of resolutions and motions, which, although unpredictable, may include such issues as women's rights generally and the role of women in the church, world hunger, homosexuality, sex and violence on television, abortion, the economy, anti-semitism, energy, capital punishment, pornography, labor-management problems, white collar crime, tuition tax credits and public support of parochial schools, and nuclear proliferation.

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Besides items of business brought by the SBC Executive Committee and agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention, messengers are expected to elect Jimmy R. Allen, pastor of First Baptist Church, San Antonio, Texas, to a traditional second one-year term as SBC president.

Business items will include a vote on a proposed 1978-79 national Cooperative Program unified budget of \$75 million for world missions. That includes a \$62 million portion for basic operating needs of SBC agencies \$2 million for capital needs, and \$11 million as a Bold Mission Thrust challenge budget for unmet worldwide mission causes.

The SBC Executive Committee also will ask messengers to approve a capital needs program for 1978-84 for the six SBC seminaries, the Brotherhood Commission and the Radio and Television Commission amounting to \$16,705,985; and a convention operating budget of \$1,062,000, which includes \$602,000 from the Cooperative Program and the balance from dividends and interest and SBC Sunday School Board contributions.

The convention operating budget covers such expenses as the annual SBC meeting, budget of the Executive Committee, contribution to the Baptist World Alliance, and other items.

Other recommendations from the Executive Committee include a suggested logo for voluntary use by Southern Baptists; alterations in the agreement between Southern Baptists and the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., which have a joint relationship with American Baptist Theological Seminary in Nashville; selection of Superdome in New Orleans as site of the 1982 SBC meeting; and changes in convention constitution and bylaws which would consolidate and clarify references to gender, laity and clergy, and voting procedure on SBC officers.

The latter recommendation would ask adoption of Section 10 (2) of the Revised Bylaws of the Southern Baptist Convention which declares: "If an officer does not receive a majority of votes cast on the first ballot, subsequent ballots should carry the names of those who are included in the top 50 percent of total votes cast on the previous ballot."

Besides Mrs. Graham, Miss Anders, Trueblood and Allen (who will also deliver the president's address), other key program personnel include actress Jeanette Clift George of Houston, Texas; Jesse C. Fletcher of Abilene, Texas, president of Hardin-Simmons University, who will deliver the convention sermon; Forrest Feezor, 85, of Shelby, N. C., retired Texas Baptist executive secretary; Harry Hollis of the SBC Christian Life Commission, Nashville, Tenn.; and a taped interview with British social critic Malcolm Muggeridge.

Entertainer Anita Bryant, who has led efforts opposing homosexuality and urging a return of prayer to public schools, will appear prior to the main SBC meeting on the opening night program of the SBC Pastors' Conference. The conference will be held, June 11-12 at the Georgia World Congress Center.

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Penetration Teams Plan
To Double Sunday Schools

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptists in upper New England are using Bold Mission Penetration Teams to try and double the number of Sunday Schools, churches and church-type missions by the end of this year.

One hundred twenty persons have been trained and formed into the teams with a goal of starting 20 new Sunday Schools in Vermont, Maine and New Hampshire. The teams conduct ACTION enrollment campaigns, participate in witnessing and ministry efforts and conduct surveys.

"We're encouraging teams to use the ACTION enrollment plan and go ahead and start a Sunday School," said Curtis Griffis, director of religious education for the New England Baptist Fellowship. "Sometimes in the past our process for starting new work has included so many different steps that it has actually slowed our progress."

The first new Sunday School was started in Rutland, Vt., by Oliver Lusk, a Christian Service Corps volunteer who also is a contract worker with the Sunday School Board's growth section. New work also has been started in Derre and Hanover, N. H. Two fellowships recently were begun in Maine.

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