

Written by Administrator
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MONTGOMERY -- Casino owner Milton McGregor will plead innocent at his arraignment Friday on federal vote-buying charges, his lawyer said this evening.

McGregor lawyer Joe Espy said he's looking forward to proving that McGregor is innocent of the charges brought by federal prosecutors. McGregor and 10 others will be arraigned Friday morning in Montgomery federal court on charges accusing them of buying and selling votes related to a gambling bill before the Alabama legislature.

Espy, who held a press conference this evening, said he expects the other defendants to enter the same plea of not guilty. In addition to McGregor, a federal grand jury indicted another gambling operator, four legislators, three lobbyists, a casino spokesman and a legislative employee on charges related to a gambling bill. Federal prosecutors have accused the gambling operators, lobbyists and legislators of participating in a broad scheme to offer millions of dollars in campaign contributions, a \$1 million-a-year job and election-year assistance in exchange for critical yes votes on a gambling bill.

Espy questioned why McGregor was arrested last week when he had offered to turn himself in to authorities. FBI agents showed up at McGregor's home at about 7 a.m. last Monday and handcuffed him, Espy said.

"What was that about? There was no need for that," Espy said.

All of those indicted were arrested last week, rather than surrendering themselves to authorities.

"Not a single one of them was a flight risk," Espy said.

Espy said no decision has been made on whether McGregor will seek to be tried separately from the other defendants. He said he will not ask that the trial be moved out of Montgomery.

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