

Vegas-style Casinos

The lottery debate in recent years hasn't centered on an actual lottery. That is, walking into a gas station and buying a paper ticket with a few numbers.

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No. There's a strong pro-gambling lobby in Alabama that seeks to take advantage of any momentum behind a lottery proposal to include measures legalizing what's known as Class III gaming – card tables, roulette wheels and slot machines.

By including some specific language in a lottery bill, they could later artfully argue that expansion of gaming into Class III has already become law, thus giving them a green light to open casinos.

And then there are those who have stakes in existing gaming facilities such as dog tracks and electronic bingo halls. They push hard to ensure that no legislation passes that could create competition.

Point is, those who profit from the forms of gambling we have now, and who could profit from expanded forms in the future, see a simple lottery as a threat. They want to protect what they have, and then expand their offerings to keep existing customers and lure even more.

Horse Trading

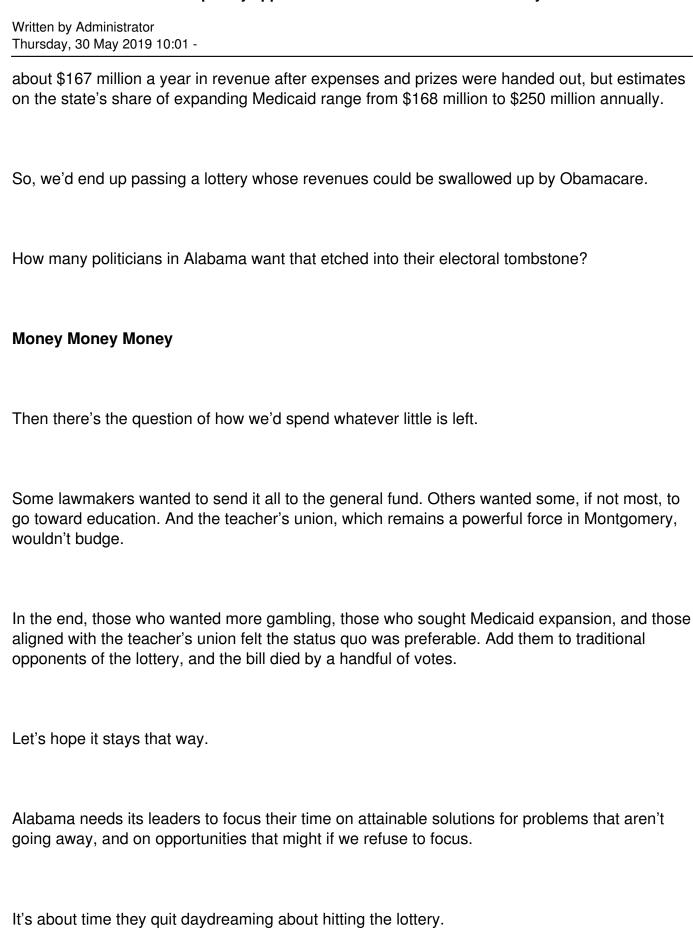
Several lawmakers who favored a lottery in the past found themselves holding out for assurances that Alabama would adopt a key provision of Obamacare by expanding Medicaid, the insurance program for the poor and disabled.

The issue here is that while the federal government pays for the first few years of the expansion, Alabama would eventually cough-up an increasingly higher percentage of an ever-growing expense.

As the bill moved through the Legislature, it was reported that lawmakers were considering paying that additional cost with lottery revenue in a bid to collect more votes.

Here's the problem: the Legislative Service Agency estimated that the lottery would generate

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