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State-sponsored Lotteries Fail to Deliver

By Joe Godfrey

It was recently reported that Rep. Craig Ford (D-Gadsden) plans to introduce a bill during the 2014 Alabama Legislative Session calling for a constitutional amendment allowing a statewide lottery “for education.”

There are several reasons to oppose this legislation:

(1) Many argue: “Let the people vote!” Even those who oppose gambling think if we allow the people of Alabama to vote, we can settle the issue once and for all. The problem with that argument is the pro-gambling forces will pour millions of dollars into a campaign to convince people that gambling is good, while opponents (mostly churches) will have to scrape together missions and ministry money to fight passage of a constitutional amendment. Also, the people of Alabama *did* vote against a lottery in 1999, but here we are 15 years later with pro-gambling forces still pushing for a lottery. A vote of the people will never silence the pro-gambling forces.

(2) If the Alabama Constitution is amended to allow for a statewide lottery, which is considered Class III Gambling, the door would be opened for every form of gambling, including full-fledged casino gambling with table games and slot machines. Mississippi voted several years ago to allow a statewide lottery, but they have never had a lottery. Instead, the Mississippi coast and cities along the Mississippi River are now flooded with “Vegas-styled” casinos. People argue, “Well, that didn’t happen in Georgia.” But, unlike Alabama and Mississippi, Georgia doesn’t have federally-recognized Indian tribes. If a statewide lottery should be legalized (Class III Gambling), the National Indian Gaming

Commission would immediately allow the Indians to open full-fledged casinos. Other, non-Indian groups would then demand the same right to open casinos. It is bad enough that the Indian Gaming Commission is allowing electronic bingo machines (which the Alabama attorney general is trying to stop through a lawsuit that is currently making its way through the courts), but if a statewide lottery should be legalized, gambling in Alabama would rise to a whole new level.

(3) State-sponsored gambling has proven to be a failed policy everywhere it has been tried. According to www.StopPredatoryGambling.org: “There is overwhelming evidence proving the government program of predatory gambling has failed as a revenue source for our society. Despite promising it would fund public education, the California state lottery provides only 1.3% of the state’s entire education budget. States with lotteries and casinos have not lowered their taxes and according to the recent national report by The Rockefeller Institute, it has made their budget problems even worse. Predatory gambling costs more than the revenue it brings in, leaving those citizens who rarely gamble to pay the bill. Each compulsive gambler costs the economy between \$14,006 and \$22,077 per year.”

ALCAP needs pastors and churches to stay abreast of this issue during the 2014 Session and to contact your legislators if and when necessary. Sign up to receive ALCAP alerts at our website: www.ALCAP.com.

Joe Godfrey is executive director of the Alabama Citizens Action Program.

The articles in this issue were gathered from various sources.
The opinions in the *Christian Life Report* are not necessarily the opinions of the Christian Life Commission.

Negotiating the Cultural Sinkholes

By Darryl Wood

The Geological Survey of Alabama identifies more than 6,000 sinkholes statewide. When they form in populated areas, sinkholes make trouble. Recently, one swallowed a street in downtown Birmingham. Most sinkholes cannot be predicted or prevented. When they occur, care must be taken to minimize damage to people and property in the area.

Believers live in a world prone to cultural sinkholes: social trends that run counter to Bible truths. Our society redefines marriage and family, glorifies exhibitionist entertainers, perpetuates educational disparities and devalues human life. What's a Christian to do to avoid the destruction caused by these cultural sinkholes?

Jesus addressed that issue in His prayer of John 17: Believers are not "of the world," but we exist "in the world" with its cultural sinkholes (John 17:11-19). Our challenge is not simply to identify the problem but to offer a biblical response. Look to Jesus' prayer for a valid approach.

First, Christianity and culture have always been at odds. Jesus agonized that the "world has hated them, because they are not of the world" (John 17:14). No generation of believers encounters calm seas in the navigation of the ocean of culture. Do not be surprised when you encounter a cultural sinkhole.

Second, prepare for the battle with cultural sinkholes where they do the most damage: within you. Jesus prayed that the Father would "keep them in Your name" (John 17:11). He wanted believers to "have My joy" (John 17:13). When kept by God and filled with the joy of

Christ within, no room remains for the evil of the world to invade. Paul suggested that Christians avoid conformity to the world by being "transformed by the renewing of your minds" (Romans 12:2).

Third, accept your role in a world that you are "not of" (John 17:14-16). Jesus said, "I have sent them into the world" and prayed for us to be "sanctified in truth" (John 17:18-19). After the internal battle with the cultural sinkholes, bold believers move outward to the conflict. You are sent into the world to convey the truth. Know the difference between railing against the sin of this world and living the truth of Christ in it.

No one Christian can stop the formation of cultural sinkholes. When they appear near you, however, step forward to fill them and thus protect others from danger. Address the sinkhole of same-sex marriage with the Bible truth that God instituted marriage as a covenant relationship between one man and one woman. Defend against the sinkhole of pornography by teaching the truth that purity of mind and body honors God. Correct racial divides by trumpeting the truth that God loves every human equally and so should we.

Negotiating cultural sinkholes remains an ongoing demand for believers. Anticipate the sinkholes. Prepare to avoid them by filling your life with God's truth. Then take that truth into the world to guard others from being victimized.

Darryl Wood is pastor of the First Baptist Church of Vincent and a member of the Christian Life Commission.

SPECIAL SUNDAYS IN 2014

- **Sanctity of Human Life Sunday:**
January 19
- **Racial Reconciliation Sunday:**
February 9
- **Substance Abuse Prevention Sunday:**
March 16
- **Citizenship & Religious Liberty Sunday:**
June 29

- **Social Issues Sunday:**
August 3
- **Anti-Gambling Sunday:**
September 21
- **World Hunger Sunday:**
October 12
- **ALCAP Sunday:**
November 9

FACTS & ISSUES

Compiled by Keith Hinson — Associate for Public Relations & Christian Ethics
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“The Bible’s teachings are clear that life is from the Lord and to be valued. And yet abortion continues. I can’t help but think of the potential preachers, teachers, leaders and others who have been lost to abortion. America is a great country, but how much greater could it have become without the sin and degradation into which we have slipped? Let’s do more than ever before to help stop abortion!” — *Art Burroughs, retired pastor, Fulton Road Baptist Church, Mobile, and member of the Christian Life Commission*

“I cannot see that happening in my life. I fear the disapproval of God more than I fear your disapproval or the disapproval of society.” — *Rick Warren, pastor, Saddleback Church, Lake Forest, Calif., asked on “Piers Morgan Live” whether Warren and other Christian preachers would ever affirm same-sex marriage*

“God creates human life and retains ownership of it. He graciously allows you to be a manager of life — to care for it and use it for His glory. Any abuse of life, including unhealthy habits or self-destructive behaviors, indicates that you have overstepped your managerial authority. This includes other lives for which you have been given responsibility. Treasure God’s gift of life, and know your place.” — *Darryl Wood, pastor, First Baptist Church, Vincent, and member of the Christian Life Commission*

“Christians are committed to the truth. Our culture feeds on celebrity gossip, and many feed on community gossip. In the New Testament, James insisted the unbridled tongue is an instrument from hell (James 3:6). All of us have seen the lives of others damaged by hurtful words when people give themselves to speculation and idle talk. Authenticity demands we choose a better path. Christians are committed to Christ, studying the Scripture and determining His will for our lives and His direction in our decisions. There is no shortage of other voices today calling out words of supposed wisdom. Authenticity demands we choose a better path.” — *Michael J. Brooks, pastor, Pine Flat Baptist Church, Selma, and member of the Christian Life Commission*

“The Chinese government is relaxing its one-child policy. Millions of women in China have been forced to abort a second child. As a result, China’s elderly population is 11 percent today and will be 32 percent by 2050 unless the trend is reversed. China faces a major problem in not having enough young people to take care of the aging. Today in China there are 130 young men for every 100 young women. This is a result of sex selection abortions.” — *Joe Bob Mizzell, pastor, Hopewell Baptist Church, Marion, and member of the Christian Life Commission*

“When God breathed into Adam the breath of life, Adam became a living soul. The soul of a human is passed down from parents to the child. Thus, human life begins at conception. To violate that life is to infringe on a

person’s right to life. Alabama, in large part due to the influence of Bible-believing Christians, is overwhelmingly pro-life. However, Americans United for Life (<http://www.aul.org/states/alabama>) rates Alabama #20 in laws restricting abortion. A supermajority of our legislature ran on a pro-life platform. Pro-life citizens should demand further legislation restricting abortion in our state.” — *John Killian, president, Alabama Baptist State Convention, and pastor, Maytown Baptist Church*

“To date, as far as science is concerned, a genetic predetermination and/or a biological basis for homosexuality simply do not exist. ... Civil rights are reserved for human characteristics that are immutable. So, as far as science is concerned, homosexuality is a behavior and does not qualify for special rights. Our founding fathers likely would voice outrage over recent judicial rulings forcing businesses to participate in celebrations of a behavior. God-fearing, freedom-loving Americans should too.” — *Kelly Boggs, “Wedding cakes & photos in the fray,” Baptist Press, Dec. 13, 2013*

“RESOLVED, That we call on the Department of Health and Human Services to withdraw the contraceptive services mandate or to provide clear and meaningful exemptions from the mandate based on conscientious religious objections; and ... RESOLVED, That we express solidarity with those other persons across our nation who are engaged in legal actions opposing the contraceptive services mandate in order to champion a robust view of religious freedom in America.” — *excerpt from Resolution No. 1, “On Contraceptive Services Mandate,” adopted by messengers to the Alabama Baptist State Convention, Nov. 12, 2013*

“If a person’s definition of love is affirming whatever makes someone happy, then a redefinition is needed because that’s not love. Love doesn’t just affirm whatever makes a person happy. It seeks the well-being of its objects. That’s why God indeed loves ‘gays’ and at the same time doesn’t affirm them in their homosexuality. Instead of unlovingly affirming them in an eternally harmful lifestyle, God lovingly calls them out through the Gospel of Jesus Christ just like He does all sinners.” — *Ben Simpson, “Yes indeed, God loves gays,” Baptist Press, November 21, 2013*

“While we in the West, thankfully, aren’t being called upon to ‘pay in blood,’ we are living in a culture increasingly hostile to Christianity, not just in the public sphere but in the private one, as well. ... [T]here’s no doubt that we’re going to be tested in the years to come. It can’t be helped. Saying ‘Jesus Christ is Lord’ is confession of where our allegiance lies. That confession has always come with a cost, as our brethren around the world know all too well.” — *John Stonestreet, “Are We Up to the Task? The Global War on Christians, part 4,” BreakPoint Commentaries, December 5, 2013, www.breakpoint.org*



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Utah Polygamy Law Upended by Federal Judge

By Art Toalston

SALT LAKE CITY (BP) — U.S. District Court Judge Clark Waddoups declared key parts of Utah's polygamy law unconstitutional on December 13 in a case involving the Brown family from TLC's reality show, "Sister Wives."

The decision by Waddoups, as described by the *Salt Lake Tribune*, holds that "key parts of Utah's polygamy laws are unconstitutional." The 91-page ruling "sets a new legal precedent in Utah, effectively decriminalizing polygamy," the newspaper stated.

Russell D. Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, reacted to the ruling: "This is what happens when marriage becomes about the emotional and sexual wants of adults, divorced from the needs of children for a mother and a father committed to each other for life."

"Polygamy was outlawed in this country because it was demonstrated, again and again, to hurt women and children. Sadly, when marriage is elastic enough to mean anything, in

due time it comes to mean nothing.

"The loss of a marriage consensus is about more than just social policy. Marriage is an embedded picture of the Gospel, the union between Christ and His church. That's why Jesus pointed back to the beginning, to God's creational purposes. We must talk about these issues not simply from the point of view of nature, but from the point of view of the Gospel.

"When reality TV scenarios drive our judicial decisions, we've truly reached a strange time in American life. But the Gospel was given in strange times, and remains the power of God to salvation, calling us to repent of our self-made attempts at autonomy and back to God's purposes."

Judge Waddoups, of the U.S. District Court for the District of Utah, was a nominee of President George W. Bush in 2008. Waddoups holds a law degree from the University of Utah's law school and an undergraduate degree from Brigham Young University.