

## AG Strange got \$100,000 from Poarch Creek Casinos

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By **BOB MARTIN**

Alabama Attorney General Luther Strange says that the recent seizure of gambling devices from a HoustonCounty casino should serve as a warning to others who are engaged in illegal gambling.

Strange conducted a recent raid on the facility and confiscated about 500 electronic bingo machines from Center Stage, formerly called Country Crossing, near Dothan. Strange also said anyone operating a gambling hall should be put on notice.

He has also threatened raids on VictoryLand in Macon County if it is reopened, yet has continued to permit gambling elsewhere without threats, including Greenetrack in Greene County which advertises it has "over 300 of your favorite gaming machines - The Lucky Duck , Bucks and Bucks, Wild Billy, Hotter than Hell, Robbin Some Cash, Four Leaf Cash, Big Dawgz, Crimson 7's, Inferno 7's and many more, to operate wide open.

Both Macon and GreeneCounties have solid constitutional amendments which in the opinion of most legal experts permit all types of bingo games, including those played on electronic machines. Another bingo casino has been operating in LowndesCounty for several months under a constitutional amendment that some consider questionable with regard to electronic games.

Some have suggested that Strange, in going after the non-Indian gambling houses in Alabama, is attempting to give the Poarch Creek Indian gambling operation the ability to further monopolize gaming in Alabama. Indeed, the Poarch Creek tribe laundered \$100,000 to the Strange Campaign for Attorney General in 2010.

The money trail for the \$100,000 amount went from the Poarch Leadership Committee to the Republican Leadership Committee on July 15, 2010; from the Republican Leadership Committee to the Alabama Republican Party on July 22, 2010, then from the Alabama Republican Party to the Luther Strange Campaign on August 4, 2010.

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Sources tell me that in order to seize control of the gambling issue in Alabama from Gov. Bentley, Strange has covered up his connections with the Poarch Creeks, even to the extent of pretending to question their use of electronic bingo at tribal casinos in Atmore, Montgomery and Wetumpka. His "pretend" question, challenging the use of those "slot-machine look-alikes" was shot down by the Indian Gaming Regulatory Commission with these words: "If a state permits paper bingo, a tribe within that state may have electronic bingo." Following this logic, if the Poarch tribe can have those rights, certainly the rest of us would be so entitled.

So Strange, with a "wink and a nod" to our governor seized the issue of gambling from the governor's control, expects such to be a continuing cash cow for political contributions, and will likely expect several more hundreds of thousand dollars from the Poarch casinos. Then he'll try to shake down the rest of us instead of allowing those who want to gamble to help the tax burden of everybody else.

It would be interesting to see what would happen if Mr. Strange went after the real illegal gambling in our state...sports betting, which even puts slot machines in the shade. Or, perhaps he could join with the governor and force the Poarch Creeks, since they pay no taxes, into a compact like Florida's which requires 25 percent of Indian Casino profits be paid to the state.

### Evacuation Confusion

Former Gov. Bob Riley's decision to evacuate all of Mobile and most of Baldwin County as Hurricane Dennis approached was something most folks along the coast won't forget.

Gov. Robert Bentley ran into the same problem with the approach of Tropical Storm Isaac. A conference call with local officials was quickly organized, but two elected officials say they received notice less than five minutes before its start. Others joined the call in progress, receiving the access code via text message from colleagues who were already on the line. And still others — including Mobile Mayor Sam Jones and Orange Beach Mayor Tony Kennon — said they received no invitation at all, missing the call entirely.

Bentley was lauded for his earlier handling of the devastating tornado that struck Tuscaloosa,

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and his leadership after the storm has generally been lauded.

I'm sure the governor will learn, if he already hasn't, that you can't please everybody all the time, but the evacuation of tens of thousands of people is a decision worthy of consultation with those on the ground.

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