

Governor at odds with Alabama's best interest

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By [BOB MARTIN](#)

Gov. Bentley has contributed to some positive public policy for our state but now he's playing politics with the healthcare of a quarter million Alabamians.

This past week State Retirement Systems CEO David Bronner urged the state's business community to get involved and help persuade Bentley to accept federal funds to expand Medicaid in Alabama and cover nearly a quarter-million additional Alabama citizens who have no medical insurance.

If the governor refuses, here's what the state loses:

If Bentley does nothing he will have allowed \$375 million from the feds to vanish. "How can our business community do nothing over the next 30 days and allow this to happen," Bronner asks? He says that if the governor sits mute on this issue it will cost Alabama \$1.5 billion a year for three years being infused in our economy at no cost to the state's taxpayers.

A University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) study shows that if Alabama stays in the program through 2020 our costs would total \$771 million (6.2%) of the estimated \$12.5 billion in new Medicaid program costs over the 2014-2020 period. "It makes my head hurt to think about the

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state losing this opportunity for its most needy citizens," Bronner says. Alabama comes out way ahead to the tune of \$13 billion-\$15 billion.

He cautions that current reimbursement for the poor when Alabama does not accept Medicaid expansion will be lost. That alone will result in the closure of some rural hospitals, devastating communities that depend on those facilities.

From an economic standpoint, it will be almost impossible to recruit jobs to a county without a hospital.

"Our past governors have traveled the world to find companies to locate here. Alabama has paid hundreds of millions of dollars for a mere 1,000 jobs. Industrial recruitment has been absolutely critical to Alabama's development. Yet when another study funded by the Alabama Hospital Association says Medicaid expansion will create 30,700 jobs over seven years, our governor claims the study is bogus.

That is nonsense and raw politics at its worst," Bronner asserts.

SEC Championship Game

The odds for the SEC Championship Game between Auburn and Missouri this weekend in Atlanta started out as predictions of a close matchup. The game is scheduled for 3 p.m. Central at the Georgia Dome. The game will be televised by CBS.

The first odds to hit the street by Odd Shark (www.odds shark.com) listed Missouri as a two point favorite with an over and under of 59. Danny Sheridan had Auburn as a three point favorite.

The game pits Auburn's SEC leading run game, which amassed 296 yards against Alabama's outstanding defense last Saturday against a Missouri defense that held Heisman Trophy winner Johnny Manziel to 216 yards of offense and leads the SEC in sacks.

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The atmosphere at Auburn was electric last Saturday. I would estimate the population of Auburn increased to at least to 100,000 during the game. I managed to make it to three tailgate events, but only saw one with an actual tailgate. However I did get in a lot of walking.

The game with respect to drama and excitement matched "The 17-16 game" at Legion Field in Birmingham which I had the opportunity to witness. I have always thought the game should be played at a neutral location in our state, mainly because crowd noise, and it was at its peak at Jordan-Hare Stadium last Saturday, can, I believe, provide a distinct advantage to the home team.

It has been called the most intense rivalry in sports.

Greg Doyel of CBS Sports agrees and described it this way: "Lose to Alabama and its sucks for an Auburn fan for 365 days. The next-door neighbors have a Crimson Tide flag on their porch. The family down the street has a dog named Bear. And forget about the grocery store. Alabama fans are everywhere, and they're gloating because their school won the biggest game of the year, a game so big that folks in that state would pause if given this either/or choice: winning a national championship -- or winning the Iron Bowl.

This year Auburn gets the opportunity to do both. Go Tigers.

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