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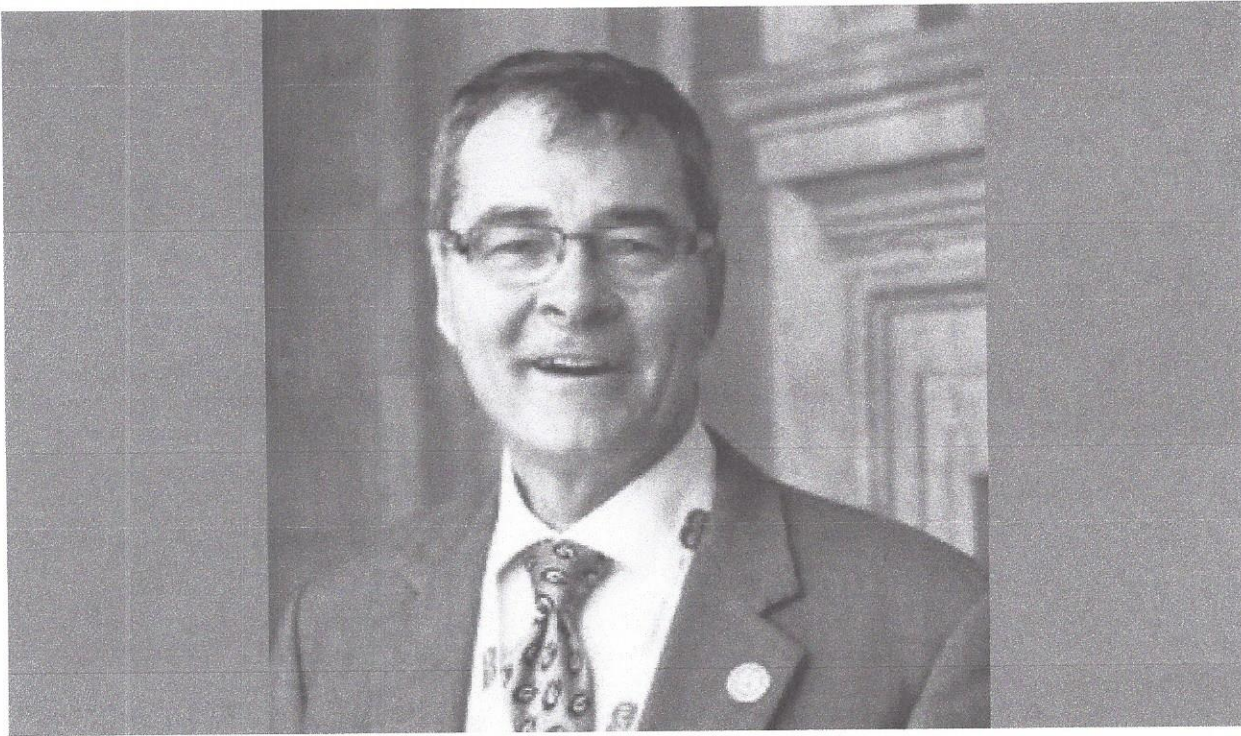
Posted February 27, 2017 03:05 pm - Updated February 27, 2017 10:28 am

By Tim Echols (tim@echols.com)

Tim Echols: Casino gambling a bad bet for Georgia

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Casino owners are betting on Georgia, and their lobbyists are doubling down on policy makers across the state. Before we go all-in on their gold-plated plans, let's count the costs you may not hear that much about.

The bill currently under consideration at the Capitol would have the state getting 20 percent of casinos' gambling revenues. One casino is proposed for Atlanta and one for Savannah. But that 20 percent cut would then be split between various state programs. Fighting for a share of the money is trauma care, rural hospitals, HOPE Scholarships, and a new needs-based college scholarship.

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But I am not the first one to raise concerns. Deep in Appendix C of a Central Atlanta Progress report issued early this year, we find the potential social impacts of a casino located in the Atlanta or Savannah area. These harms include reduced productivity at work, higher crime rates, bad debts, bankruptcy, divorce, and therapy and welfare costs.



Casino owners are betting on Georgia, another lobbyist is hoping down the road
markets across the state. But -- we go all-in on the gold medal plus a few more
you may not hear that much about.

The bill currently under consideration at the Capitol would have the state take 50%
percent of casino gaming revenue. The state is expected to take 50% of the
Savannah. But that 50 percent would then be split between various state programs.
Fighting for a share of the money is mainly a state and local battle. HOPE for Georgia is
new needs-based college scholarship.

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column/2012-10-05/john-kinn-casino-gaming-is-a-bad-bet-for-georgia/

But I am not the one to take the money. I am in Atlanta. I am in Atlanta.
Progress report issued early this year was in a format that made it easy to
located in the Atlanta or Savannah area. There is no other reduced productivity
right away. But there are other things that are not easy and not easy.

Among these, crime and bankruptcy have received the most research attention, the report says. The report even says political corruption is expected to rise. Sounds like we'll need to hire more police officers and psychologists too.

In fact, a Reno, Nev., study cited in the aforementioned report noted that 22 percent of Reno's reported crimes occurred within 1,000 feet of major casinos. In one year, these "crime magnet zones" in Reno resulted in 469 assaults, 167 robberies, 246 domestic batteries, 36 rapes, 980 burglaries, 613 car crimes, 1,023 drug or liquor disorderly conducts crimes, 129 prostitution arrests, 1,249 financial crimes, 23 gun-related crimes, and four murders. Let's hope that the scholarship recipients from casino gambling don't have to go to these facilities to pick up their money.

One thing was not mentioned: Human Trafficking. And the research coming out of Las Vegas should give us pause. A study from UNLV shows that casino patrons are 17 percent more likely to pay for sex than the average survey respondent. Given the reputation that Atlanta already has when it comes to child sex trafficking, casinos will make an already bad problem worse. Another study by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice showed that casinos are often the rendezvous location for sexual encounters. We have seen in Atlanta an insatiable appetite for children, and bringing casinos in will put even greater pressure on our law enforcement agencies trying to curb this atrocity.

Through the UnHoly Tour I often lead to trafficking hotspots, we have heard horror stories about the nature of Georgia's sex-related business. Eyewitness accounts from law enforcement, victims and non-profits agencies are all too common about girls shanghaied into sex slavery.

Are we really so naïve to think that casinos in our state will not increase the number of girls brought into our city? There is no amount of trauma or need-based scholarships financed from gambling proceeds to equal the pain of one of these girls and women sold dozens of times each day to casino patrons.

Elected officials like myself look to constituents and the "will of the people" when we don't have a conviction or personal opinion about a particular issue or concern. That may be the case for your legislator who is weighing how to vote on this issue this legislative session. Don't leave to chance this issue. Speak out today.

Among these, crime and bankruptcy have received the most negative attention, the report says. The report even says public opinion is expected to rise 70% if the bill used to fine more police officers and prosecutors too.

In fact, a Reno News study cited in the aforementioned report noted that 23 percent of Reno's reported crime occurred within 1,000 feet of major casinos. In one year, there "crime magnet zones" in Reno resulted in 497 assaults, 117 robberies, 346 sexual battery, 36 rape, 988 burglaries, 613 car crimes, 1,053 drug or liquor offenses, 1,000 crimes, 139 prostitution arrests, 1,100 financial crimes, 23 gun-related crimes, and four murders. Let's hope that the school ship residents from Reno gambling don't have to go to these facilities to pick up their money.

One thing was not mentioned, Human Trafficking. And the research coming out of Las Vegas should give us pause. A study from UNLV shows that casino casinos are 13 percent more likely to pay for sex than the average survey respondent. Given the research that Atlanta already has when it comes to child sex trafficking, casinos will make an already bad problem worse. Another study by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice showed that casinos are often the rendezvous location for sexual encounters. We have seen in Atlanta an inevitable appetite for children and trafficking casinos is well out of even further pressure on our law enforcement agencies trying to curb this activity.

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As we really so hard to think that crime in our state will not increase the number of girls brought into our city. There is no amount of money or even forced sexual slavery financial from gambling proceeds to equal the pain of one of these girls and women sold dozens of times each day to casino patrons.

Elected officials like myself look in confusion and the "will of the people" when we don't have a conviction or personal question about a particular issue or person. That may be the case for your legislator who is weighing how to vote on this issue. The legislative session. Don't have to change this issue. Speak out today.

Tim Echols has three degrees from the University of Georgia. He is an elected official and serves as Vice-Chairman of the Georgia Public Service Commission.



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