

# A Bankrupt Idea

*by Anthony Jordan*

It's that time of year again. Promises from politicians are more numerous than mosquitoes in a swamp. They all promise lower taxes, better education, prescription drug relief for the elderly, better roads and on and on. Many of their ideas are good. But a promise isn't much of a promise anymore. Too many times it only means I will try to do something unless I change my mind.

Some promises are bankrupt before they leave the lips of the politician. One such promise is the lottery. We are told that the lottery will provide free roads, free college education and more; that the lottery will save Oklahoma from belt tightening and provide millions of dollars, primarily for schools. If you believe these promises, I would love to sell you some prime real estate to build a home in the Florida Everglades. Of course, you'll have to survive the 'gators and the swamp--but that's no big deal!

The lottery, like every other gambling scheme, is fatally flawed. Surely Oklahomans who listened to the promises of politicians and big gambling interests in the "Let the Horses Run!" campaign recognize a losing proposition when they see it. The issue was never horse racing; it was gambling. We were told gambling would be the panacea for education and government. After listening to the gambling industry that pushed for Remington Park and the other lesser racetracks in Oklahoma, one would have thought we would not even have to pay taxes because of the financial windfall to government from horse racing.

What has been the result? NO money has come to state coffers. Education has not been helped. Taxes are as high as ever. The tracks now want to offer more options for gambling, because the crowds won't come to bet on the horses. In the end, the tracks are losing money and all the good causes that were supposed to benefit economically have gained nothing.

Now we are told the lottery is the answer. It hasn't been in other states that are bigger and have the potential for more people to gamble. Why should we expect it to be the solution in Oklahoma? Why should we believe the same line from politicians who have not fulfilled on the horse gambling issue? Why would we want to marry government to one of the most corrupt industries in the nation? Isn't government corrupt enough without inviting outside gambling interests into our state to help run a lottery? Should government be in a position to entice some of the most vulnerable citizens to throw their meager resources at a game that has the longest odds of any game of chance? I DON'T THINK SO.

Oklahomans are smarter than to be sucked into a losing proposition. Our state has been built on the shoulders of men and women who have worked hard, saved consistently, invested in honest businesses and given generously to the worthy institutions and causes that make this state great. Gambling does not cure the financial cancers among us. It produces more cancer. The lottery will only stimulate more gambling and open an already wide door for more Indian gaming.

The lottery is a bust. It is a bankrupt idea. It is time for elected officials to come together and address the issues of our state by setting special interests aside. Good government run by good men and women is the answer--not the lottery.

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