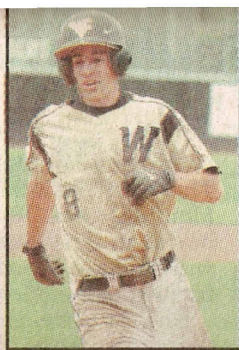


Walker falls by run to Athens

A day after lighting up the scoreboard with 29 runs, Walker's baseball team was unable to come up with a clutch hit as the Athens Golden Eagles held off a late rally for a 3-2 victory at Valley Park in their Class 5A playoff series. / C1



More debates?

Hillary Rodham Clinton took the debate dispute to a new level Saturday, challenging Barack Obama to face off with her in a debate without a moderator, Lincoln-Douglas style. Her campaign made the offer formal with a letter to the Obama campaign. Obama aides said they were studying the letter. / A7



A day at the spa

For years, local residents had to drive to Birmingham to get an exfoliating body scrub or hydrating aromatherapy facial. Now such services are available closer to home at Rastore Spa, the first day spa in Jasper. The spa is owned and managed by Alicia Davis, an Oakman native who now lives in Jasper. / B1

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ALABAMA LEGISLATURE

Sherer, Bishop debate bingo bills

By ED HOWELL
Eagle Senior Writer

State Rep. Tommy Sherer, D-Jasper, has confirmed he will not push Sen. Charles Bishop's bingo bills any more, which may leave only a special session as the last resort to pass the bills banning bingo halls and electronic bingo machines.

The next move, if that fails, would be a constitutional amendment for next year that would decide the fate of electronic bingo and, if it stays, whether vastly different rules will apply. Sherer, who co-sponsored the Bishop bills until now, said late Friday in a statement that state Rep. Ken Guin, D-Carbon Hill,

"There is no reason to go through this laborious process resulting in the situation remaining unchanged."

**Rep. Tommy Sherer,
D-Jasper**

would vote against the bingo bills, making any effort worthless.

"Again, there is no reason to go through this laborious process resulting in the situation remaining unchanged," he said.

Bishop, R-Arley, who found out about Sherer's stand Friday morning, said he is disappointed

in both Guin and Sherer on the matter.

"He's had a change of heart, him and Guin both," Bishop said.

Bishop said Sherer can call a meeting of the Local Legislation Committee that Sherer is a member of and pass the Bishop bills out. Then the bills would go to the Tourism Committee,

which Bishop said would likely pass them, and they would be placed on the calendar. On the House floor, Guin, who has called the Bishop bills unconstitutional, could then kill the bills.

Bishop said he recently asked Sherer to call for the committee meeting, adding Sherer could have called for a meeting when the bills passed out of the Senate several weeks ago.

"He said, 'I'll think about it. I'll let you know Tuesday,'" Bishop quoted Sherer as saying, meaning April 29.

"I knew (the Bishop bills were) in trouble when he came up with that second alternative bill," Bishop said.

Sherer said in March if the

Bishop bills failed, he would push for a compromise bill which would set a \$500,000 fee on each bingo hall, which would likely trim the number of halls to a few large ones.

"You can't say you are against gambling and then you say to allow it in the county but you just cut it down to a certain number," Bishop said.

Bishop expressed exasperation with the situation in the county, saying local bingo rules are ineffective and that attitudes among legislators and county officials were hypocritical.

"We haven't arrested anybody. We're always having new chari-



Rep. Tommy Sherer



Sen. Charles Bishop

See BINGO, A11 ▶

Bingo

From A1

ties and they're supposed to be there five years," he said. "It's running wild."

What happens now?

Bishop said if his bills are killed, he can go several routes. One he ruled out was to kill all local bills coming out of the House, saying the time of the session is too short and that he would like to have support later for other bills he could have. He said he will communicate that to the leadership of the House -- except for Guin, whom he said he will not talk to.

Because of the Senate being bogged down in the Macon County local bill on bingo, Bishop said it is unlikely the budgets will pass and a special session will have to be called. If that happens, Bishop said that could buy time for the Ethics Commission to rule against Guin.

Bishop then could get Gov. Bob Riley to include his bills in the governor's call for the special session, and Sherer would then be free to vote for them.

"Then it will be strictly in Tommy Sherer's hands," Bishop said.

If all that fails, Bishop said he would then hold town meetings in the county in advance of introducing a local bill to set up a new constitutional amendment for local bingo. County voters would have to approve the amendment after it passes in the Legislature.

He said he would hope a "yes" vote would set up new rules and a "no" vote would abolish electronic bingo, using one amendment. Legal experts might tell him it might have to be accomplished in two amendments, such as with one taking effect if the other fails, he said.

If new rules were passed, Bishop said they would likely take away power from the county commission to set rules and would set up a new gambling commission to oversee Walker County bingo. How money is distributed to the charities would be changed, particularly in the percentage of funds going to the charities. While violations against the county bingo rules constitute a misdemeanor, he would set up some viola-

tions to be felony charges, Bishop said.

Bishop on Macon bill

He also responded to criticism concerning Bishop votes concerning the Macon County bill, a local bill which would set up a constitutional amendment.

The paper, which has run cartoons and editorials, painted Bishop as being hypocritical in how he handled that situation as opposed to his opposition to bingo in Walker County. In recounting April 15 votes on the Macon bill, based on the Legislature's Web site, the newspaper said Bishop voted for one budget isolation resolution to bring the bill up.

Bishop said if he lived in Macon County, he would vote against the measure in a referendum. However, as a Walker County resident he didn't care what the outcome of the local bill was, as that should be up to Macon County voters. He also said if he opposed that local bill, others could come against him by blocking his local bills.

He said he is thinking of taking out

advertisements to explain the Macon votes. He also plans to host anti-bingo advocates Tuesday in Montgomery to walk them through what happened.

He also took a swipe at Guin's newspaper.

Sherer response

Sherer issued a written response late Friday and declined to answer further questions.

"It is very disappointing that Senator Bishop would want me to sign the gambling bill to Local Legislation Committee (which deals with local contested bills), knowing the outcome would be the same: The bill would be dead. This would only put the good citizens of Walker County in a bad light and further expand a growing chasm in the Walker County delegation," Sherer said.

He said it would be difficult to get a contested bill with six days left and the Senate and House both already bogged down in separate matters — the Macon County bill in the Senate and the Education Budget in the House.

"Committees seldom meet at this time of the session because it's too late for bills to get three readings and pass both the House and Senate. If I were to sign this bill to the Local Legislation Committee and it were to pass, it would then go to the Tourism Committee, again not knowing when or if this committee would meet again," he said. "But if it were to pass this committee, it would then go to the Rules Committee where it would die.

If it did make it out of rules and onto the calendar, only he and Guin would vote on it, he said.

"Unlike the Senate, the House has a gentlemen's agreement that no one votes in anyone else's local bills (especially contested bills). Therefore, there would be my yes vote and a no vote and the bill would be dead," Sherer said.

He said it is a documented fact he does not vote against gambling bills.

"My record against gambling is solid," he said. "It is very disappointing that my integrity would be questioned and tainted when it comes to this matter."