

Press statement from

JERRY BISHOP

Candidate for chairman of Walker County Commission

BISHOP OPPOSES UNIT SYSTEM IN WALKER COUNTY

For immediate releases

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Jerry Bishop, the Republican candidate on Nov. 4 for chairman of the Walker County Commission, issued the following statement today concerning the proposal of a new unit system in the county:

Recently, much has been made about the issue of creating a combined unit system in our county government. Two candidates discussed the issue at a recent meeting of the Walker County Political Accountability Coalition, favoring the unit system. Meanwhile, my opponent and other Democratic candidates for the commission have pushed the issue as a way of avoiding the current commission's failed financial management of the county, as well as their approval of the electronic bingo gambling industry.

I entered this race because of the failed management of our commission, leaving our taxpayers saddled with \$27.2 million in debt payment. I entered to bring us new industry and jobs. I have also had to take a stand against electronic bingo, which the commission allowed in through the back door and then gave their stamp of approval through new regulations designed mainly to allow the county commission to make more money while gambling ruins the homes of our friends and loved ones.

When this was brought up at the coalition meeting, I said, "We've got enough in this campaign to worry about right now. When I'm elected, we'll certainly look at anything that comes before the commission and we'll look at anything that helps this county and cuts the cost in our county. But at this particular time, I'm not going to endorse or be against it. That's my right as a politician. I think we need to look at that down the road, but I'm not for it right now."

Since that that, I have studied the matter even further and determined that going to a unit system would require going through the Alabama Legislature. A centralized shop in such a large county would take too much time each day to transport equipment and employees, taking time away from work. Money spent through a centralized method would look at the largest needs in the county, which could still benefit larger communities but possibly ignore smaller areas that now benefit from monies divided up into districts.

While some savings might be seen in equipment, it would also require hiring more engineers for a central office, thus wiping out savings. We might also lose the benefit of having one of the best engineers in the state of Alabama, David Edgil, who continues to be one of the bright spots in our county operations.

Having studied this matter further, I can see no reason why we would want to go to a unit system now or in the future. We should put this issue aside and concentrate on our real needs, which is paying down the debt that is saddled with our children and grandchildren and getting rid of an electronic bingo gambling operation that will ruin our homes and will rip out whatever chances we have to gain new industry and business. While a unit system would not be an effective solution, I will continue to seek avenues for saving money in our county government, not only because of the current debt but because of the tough economic conditions we now face -- conditions my opponent has proven incapable of handling by his own actions.

