



## ***PRESS RELEASE***

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### **Jerry Cox Hopes Lottery Commission Will Rescind Vending Machine Decision Tomorrow**

Tomorrow, the Arkansas Lottery Commission will hold a public hearing to discuss their plan to roll out 100 lottery ticket vending machines across Arkansas.

Among those present to comment on the machines will be representatives from Family Council, including Family Council President Jerry Cox.

In a statement Wednesday, Cox said, “We’ve said from Day One that these machines are going to make it easier for children to gamble and for gambling addiction to increase in our state—and it’s not just us: Over 1,220 Arkansans who submitted comments to the Lottery Commission agree that it’s a bad idea.”

Cox went on to criticize the lottery ticket vending machines, saying, “The Lottery Commission wants to roll out vending machines across Arkansas, but they haven’t even sufficiently fleshed out the rules that will govern these machines. There’s nothing in the rules that says a player has to swipe a driver’s license to play—only that ‘age verification’ will be part of the machines. Technically, that could mean the player must swipe a driver’s license, but it could also just mean they have to enter their date of birth before they can play. It’s way too open-ended to be approved at this point.

The rules do not require the machines to be monitored—only that they be placed ‘in sight of’ areas ‘normally staffed’. That could be anywhere from the back corner of a store’s produce section to the side hallway off a hotel’s lobby. It’s vague, and makes no guarantee that the machines will be properly supervised.

The rules also dictate that the machines will allow players to cash in winning tickets for machine credit, and use that credit to buy more lottery tickets from the vending machine. This means that a person could stand in front of a vending machine for hours on end, feeding what few winnings they get back into the machine. In essence, the lottery vending machine could also function like a lottery slot machine. The Arkansas Scholarship Lottery admits on its own website that this kind of player behavior is dangerous, because it is associated with problem gambling and gambling addiction, and yet they’re going to openly encourage it with these machines.

To me, the ‘rules’ governing the machines just go to show that the Lottery Commission is more concerned with grabbing all the money it can by whatever means necessary than with putting the best interest of the People first. If Arkansans were their top priority, they would have done a better job spelling out the rules that will govern the operation of these lottery ticket vending machines. It’s just unacceptable.”

Cox also raised the issue of the Lottery Commission's broken promises to Arkansas students, saying, "More than half the students who applied for lottery scholarships this year were denied. Lottery proponents have consistently implied that if the lottery met their expectations, every qualifying applicant would receive scholarship money, and yet Arkansas' lottery has exceeded everyone's expectations, and still there are thousands of qualifying students being denied scholarships.

Arkansas' lottery allocates only 22% of its revenue for scholarships—it's one of the lowest in the nation. The remaining 78% goes to advertising, administrative expenses, prizes, and their salaries. I ask you, if the Lottery Commission seriously wants to provide as much scholarship money as possible, why aren't we increasing the percentage of revenue allocated for scholarships? If the Lottery Commission had set the scholarship funding at 31.5%—which is the national average—instead of 22%, 9,000 additional students could have received scholarships.

It's a disgrace for our state. They need to devote more of their money toward the scholarships they promised. Even though we've been on opposite sides of the lottery debate, I think even Lt. Governor Halter and I would agree that the Arkansas Lottery Commission doesn't have its priorities straight."

Cox said up until now he has been "disappointed" by what he sees as a lack of transparency by the Arkansas Lottery Commission. "The Arkansas Lottery Commission didn't talk about taking public comments until we started talking about the vending machines. Over 1,200 Arkansans sent us comments for the Arkansas Lottery Commission; the Lottery Commission received four. The day we delivered those 1,200 plus comments, lottery officials barred members of the media from even entering the building where the Arkansas Lottery offices are located. They didn't announce plans for a public hearing until after people started asking for it. They didn't publicize that hearing in the paper until after we sent them a Freedom of Information Request asking where and when the hearing was publicized. The spirit of the law, here, is that the People are supposed to have ample opportunity to address members of their government, and yet this government agency has been dragging its heels every step of the way. I hope what we see tomorrow is a Lottery Commission that is genuinely interested in hearing what the People have to say and basing its decisions on the will of the People rather than the whims of a director."

Cox said if the Lottery Commission decides tomorrow to move forward with the machines in spite of public opinion to the contrary, Family Council will lobby the Arkansas Legislature to outlaw lottery ticket vending machines at the next legislative session.

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*Family Council is a conservative education and research organization based in Little Rock, Arkansas.*