



STATE OF ALABAMA  
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

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March 11, 2019

Sheriff Mark Pettway  
Jefferson County Sheriff  
2200 Rev. Abraham Woods Jr. Blvd.  
Birmingham, AL 35203

Dear Sheriff Pettway,

Thank you for speaking with me recently regarding the issue of gambling and electronic machines. As we discussed, I received information that several individuals previously connected to illegal gambling operations were planning to open “electronic bingo” facilities in Jefferson County. At that time, you informed me that you were unaware of any such plans or operations. Since our conversation, I have been informed that multiple facilities offering illegal gambling have either opened or intend to open in Jefferson County.

On the issue of “electronic bingo,” let me be clear. The Supreme Court of Alabama has consistently held that no local amendment or law permits bingo or other games of chance to be played on machines in this State. More recent opinions of the court have further underscored that the game of bingo cannot be legally played on electronic machines in Alabama. As such, these machines are illegal under Alabama law and subject to forfeiture. Moreover, because the highest court has been abundantly clear on this issue, each of us who has taken an oath to uphold the laws of this State are obligated to follow the court’s rulings.

As has been previously conveyed to sheriffs and district attorneys around the State, your role in your county is to enforce the law—it is the court’s role to interpret it. As law enforcement officials, we are responsible for enforcing the law regardless of our personal preferences and relationships or those of our constituents.

By this letter, I am requesting that you immediately notify District Attorney Carr, District Attorney Washington, and me if you or any member of your office is aware of any “electronic bingo” or other illegal gambling facility that is either open or planning to open in your community. I am further requesting that you advise us whether any individual or entity has sought a permit or license from your office, or any municipality within your jurisdiction, to operate such a facility.

I understand that you have many significant criminal matters that you are called upon daily to investigate. Please know that I stand ready to assist you and both District Attorneys to stop any illegal gambling activity that is organizing or operating in your jurisdiction.

I look forward to receiving an update from you on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steve Marshall". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "S" and "M".

Steve Marshall  
Attorney General