

Dear Editor:

Just recently, I was reading over information pertaining to the reconstruction era and the civil rights movement. I had felt a need to revisit history after the closing of Greenetrack by the state government. There is an old saying that "if you don't learn from your mistakes, you are doomed to repeat them".

You see most people are looking on the outside of this situation and thinking that this is simply about Greenetrack and gambling. On the inside, however, is a much deeper issue. One that is so serious that if it is not realized future generations will be affected. The deeper issue here is the right to vote and having that vote count(ed). In 2003, 82% of Greene County voted for bingo to be played on an electronic device. (Amendment 743). In 2010, former Governor, Bob Riley, disregarded those votes, and now, Governor Bentley has disregarded those very same votes.

We must remember that in the summer of 1964, three young men, (Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner and James Chaney) were killed in pursuit of our right to vote, hence the movie "Mississippi Burning". We must remember all who died on that "Bloody Sunday" in Selma and people like Minister James Reeb and Viola Liuzzo.

When we allow this Alabama state government to get away with taking our votes after so much blood shed, we are saying to all those mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, cousins and friends that you.....my love....died in vain.....your deaths were for nothing.

We are obligated to see past the superficial issues of Greenetrack and gambling. Governor George Wallace of yesterday would be proud that Riley, Bentley and Attorney General Strange are sticking to their southern traditions. However, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. would be deeply saddened by how we have allowed ourselves to be blinded. How very sad he would be to know that we allowed this Alabama state government to set us back 40 years.

Greene County residents must unite on this issue. In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson addressed a joint session of congress and a national television audience. His response to the violence in Alabama was to propose a law that would "strike down restrictions to voting in all elections-federal, state and local which have been used to deny the Negroes the right to vote". In that speech LBJ, invoked the anthem of the civil rights movement "but even if we pass this bill, the battle will not be over. What happened in Selma is part of a larger movement which reaches into every section and state of America. It is the effort of American Negroes to secure for themselves the full blessings of American life. Their cause must be our cause too. Because it is not just Negroes, but really it is all of us, who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice. And we shall overcome." LBJ 1965.

We have come too far to turn back now. There is a deeper issue. On June 1, 2011, when Governor Bentley allowed Luther Strange to close Greenetrack, he took away your vote. When your vote is no longer counted, your voice is no longer heard.

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