

FEATURED

Governor, state legislators discuss legislative agenda

By Russ Corey Staff Writer Updated 9 hrs ago



Governor Robert Bentley meets with those attending a Lauderdale County Republican Party dinner at the Underwood-Petersville Community Center on Tuesday. JIM HANNON/TIMES DAILY [Buy](#)

PETERSVILLE -- How to fund Medicaid, finding a solution to the state's prison crisis, gambling and creating revenue for the state in the future are all topics Gov. Robert Bentley and state legislators said the state will have to deal with next year.

Bentley was a guest at a fundraising dinner Tuesday hosted by the Lauderdale County Executive Committee at the Underwood-Petersville Community Center. Also attending were new Speaker of the House Mac McCutcheon, Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh and chairman of the Education Committee, Sen. Arthur Orr, R-Decatur.

The governor and McCutcheon said Medicaid and prisons would be a major priority for the Legislature. McCutcheon said the state would be going into federal court after the first of the year to discuss issues in the state prison system, including inmates' mental health and welfare.

McCutcheon said he also expects some discussion about infrastructure and how to fund the state Transportation Department.

"Nobody is debating the need to do something," he said. "The question is how do we get there. We're looking at the possibility of maybe putting a revenue measure out there that would have a sunset to it to address specific road needs in the state."

The governor talked about the presidential election and said his decision not to vote for the Republican presidential nominee, Donald Trump, was not solely based on the recent video release where Trump made lewd remarks about women.

"I have been upset going back to Feb. 29 when I had a press conference and I talked about the fact that he was making fun of people with disabilities and making fun of minorities, really, and woman at that time," Bentley said. "I've been accused of saying things on tape, but I have never been degrading toward women and I just can't accept that."

He said he would not vote for Trump and "I'm not going to vote for Hillary Clinton. I don't think she's a good candidate. I think we have two of the worse candidates this country has ever had as far as Republican and Democratic candidates."

While the \$1 billion BP settlement will give the state a reprieve for the next two years, the governor said the Legislature must continue to develop a long term funding source for the general fund.

"We'll have two fairly good years as far as the budget is concerned," Bentley said.

He and Orr said the state must continue to debate the gambling issue and determine what type of gaming, if any, people want.

"There will have to be some type of agreement between the Indian tribes, the Milton McGregor Group and others as to what type of legislation will be agreeable to all concerned," Orr said.

Bentley said ultimately it should be up to the people to vote on gaming.

Orr also said the state will have to continue to monitor revenue coming into the Education Trust Fund since revenue fell below expected levels in the fourth quarter of the year. Funding going into the Technical Fund was not as high as anticipated.

Will Motlow, a member of the Lauderdale County Republican Executive Committee, said money raised from the fundraiser dinner would be used to help elect Republicans running in local races.

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