



This past year the Legislature passed House Bill 967 — the Fantasy Sports Bill. HB 967 was intended to regulate the typical fantasy sports leagues on internet, social media, or in a work-place office. A participant drafts an imaginary team (hence “fantasy”) of real players, as in the NFL, and their individual statistics determine which fantasy team wins or loses. The fantasy league can be just for fun, or there can be monetary prizes from the entry fees. Good, bad, or ugly, this is what HB 967 was supposed to pertain to. This is what many of our senators and representatives thought they were voting on — Fantasy Sports.

But, when HB 967 came out of the Conference Committee (joint committee of representatives and senators who must harmonize the bills from both chambers), a “grandfather clause” had been added into the final bill. Any change in conference is underlined when the bill goes back to both chambers. I would encourage our legislators to double check bills out of the Conference Committee for underlined changes. The “grandfather clause” added to HB 967 was clearly underlined.

This “grandfather clause” states that any prior scheme of gambling

Sports Gambling is No Fantasy

in Mississippi would become legal. Years ago, on a casino ship in the bay, there was a sports bookie on ship to take bets on college and professional games (not fantasy, but the real deal). The sports bookie was on ship to take bets from only the employees of the ship, not the customers.

The gambling forces in our state have taken this “grandfather clause” and the prior scheme of gambling (that I just described) to court. They argue that gambling on college and professional games (football, basketball, etc.) should be legal in Mississippi because of HB 967. It appears that the courts may agree with the gambling forces and allow customers in casinos to make bets on real games, not fantasy.

Four casinos have already applied for permits to open sports gambling on college and professional games. Can you imagine the chaos and corruption among coaches, players,

and referees and umpires this would cause? Can you imagine a college player right out of high school being offered a car, money, or whatever to throw a game or shave points? Does Black Sox Scandal ring a bell? Why is Pete Rose (arguably the best player in baseball) prohibited from being in the Hall of Fame?

If the courts agree with the gambling forces and allow sports gambling, Mississippi would join Las Vegas as the ONLY place where SPORTS GAMBLING is legal.

Do you remember the story of the Trojan Horse? The enemy, who could not overcome the walls of Troy, built a huge horse and filled it with soldiers. The naive people of Troy opened the gates and pulled the Trojan Horse into the city — it would be a “gift” to their gods. Under the cover of darkness, the enemy soldiers came out of the horse, opened the gates to their army, and sacked

and burned Troy. The GRANDFATHER CLAUSE in HB 967 is a Trojan Horse that will open the flood gate to SPORTS GAMBLING. This is not Fantasy; this is a serious threat to our STATE. Remove this clause from HB 967, and there is no court case to allow sports gambling.

One might ask, “With our plate full dealing with the lottery, why deal with sports gambling?” Because both schemes of gambling will harm our society in the short term and long run. You can get two for the price of one. When you call, text, email or tweet the Governor, Lt. Governor, Speaker of the House, and your senator and representative, you can help kill two birds with one stone.

Ask them to remove the Grandfather Clause from HB 967 and ask them to say NO to the lottery. Call the Capitol at 601-359-3770 (during the session only.)

We need you to stand up and speak up.

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First Person: It never was about the building, anyway

By Jimmy Draper
Correspondent

It is rare for any of us to have buildings named after us. It is even more rare for us to observe the destruction of those buildings, but it happens. In fact, it just did in Nashville when Draper Tower on the former LifeWay Christian Resources campus was reduced to rubble in a few seconds on Jan. 6.

Ever since receiving a call a couple months ago that the building would be imploded, I’ve long thought about the event. God reminded me that Jesus is the great cornerstone of our faith and of LifeWay. Biblically, the cornerstone was selected with care, laid with great ceremony, and the stone itself determined the lines of the architecture of the building.

The Apostle Peter reminds us that believers have come to Christ, who is “a living stone” and that we have become “living stones” in a great spiritual

sanctuary (1 Peter 2:4-10). The apostle Paul reminds us that, “In him the whole building, being put together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord” (Ephesians 2:19-22).

“Living stone” is a magnificent figure of speech (1 Peter 2:4). It appears to be a contradiction of language, as if we said “cool fire, hot ice, bright darkness, dry water.” We normally speak of someone as “stone dead.” Yet the Bible calls Christ both our Stone or Rock and our Life.

He has the nature of a Great Stone: fixed foundation, fortress, solid, steadfast, strong, massive and immovable, but He is the living stone. In Him is vitality, life, energy, growth, and movement.

It has never been God’s intention just to have a temple for His people but to have a people for His temple. Every believer is a temple, but every Christian temple becomes a living stone in that vast, eternal temple that God is building.

The living stones in the walls of the temple become the believer-priests offering sacrifices within the temple. We are not only the stones in

the wall. We are the priests in the temple (1 Peter 2:5). This concept dignifies every life and every aspect of each life. There is no job so low or position so prestigious that it is not dignified by this high calling. All can declare, “I am a living stone in the everlasting sanctuary that the Lord Jesus Christ is building.”

Now, what does all this mean for those who have served in Draper Tower? That building was not LifeWay. It was simply one of the buildings on our campus where LifeWay served and ministered. I have walked those halls when they were empty, and in the loneliness of those moments I often thought deeply about what LifeWay is. When the buildings were empty, LifeWay was not there. The employees are LifeWay. Their passion, devotion, abilities, heart, expertise, service, and love for Him expressed through their service and love for others — that is LifeWay.

Have I been diminished by the removal of this building? Absolutely not! That building is not my legacy. The exceptional ministers employed by LifeWay are my legacy. With-

out them I have no legacy.

Some wonderful things occurred within those walls. However, that building never helped a church in its ministry nor any person in their devotion to the Lord.

It never designed a budget or a building for a church, nor provided a single piece of Bible study curriculum or a single piece of discipleship material.

It never provided retreats or conferences to strengthen church leaders, nor provided guidance for any young person in their walk with Christ.

It never printed any books to promote maturity among believers, nor provided materials scrutinized for the inventory for LifeWay Christian Stores.

It never wrote a song nor provided choir arrangements for our churches, nor addressed any of the significant challenges facing the church in this godless world.

It never won a single soul to faith in Christ.

The people who served in LifeWay’s buildings have done all that and infinitely more. Individuals come and go, but all who serve or have served at

LifeWay comprise its essence and strength. The stones, steel, and mortar of that building were lifeless materials. The only thing that made that building sacred and distinct from other buildings is the extraordinary people who ministered there and still do in another place.

When I moved back to Texas after leaving LifeWay, I did not cease to be who I am. I simply relocated to another place. LifeWay is the same. LifeWay still lives and ministers because those phenomenal people are LifeWay. Those of us who have been privileged to serve as the face of LifeWay for a season could not have done it without them.

They will always be LifeWay Christian Resources wherever they are!

Draper was president of LifeWay Christian Resources from 1991 until his retirement in 2006. LifeWay sold its Nashville property last year and relocated to a new facility also in the downtown area. Draper’s commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press. Edited for style and clarity.



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