

Kentucky gov's race stirs clash over casino suicide claims

Written by Administrator

Sunday, 27 October 2019 17:15 -

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Entering the final days of Kentucky's bitter race for governor, Republican incumbent Matt Bevin exposed himself to a new attack by flatly denying his recorded claim that suicides happen nightly in casinos.

Telling a debate audience Saturday night that the truth matters, Bevin challenged his opponent to produce a tape proving his denial wrong. Democrat Andy Beshear offered up the audiotape Sunday.

The televised exchange turned Bevin's summer radio interview on WKDZ into a talking point for Democrats heading into the last full week of campaigning in the close gubernatorial contest. In the interview, Bevin claimed, without offering evidence, that suicides occur on a nightly basis in casinos.

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The exchange highlighted the rancor between the two rivals, which intensified when Beshear, as the state's attorney general, repeatedly sued the governor for several of his policy and executive decisions.

It also was an extension of their ongoing disagreement over legalizing casino gambling to raise state revenues. Beshear supports the idea and wants to funnel the state's share of tax money into struggling public pension systems. Bevin, who has struggled in his efforts to pass comprehensive pension reform in his first term, calls casino gambling "fool's gold" and said it has no chance of passing the GOP-dominated legislature.

In the late July interview on WKDZ, Bevin is recorded claiming gambling-related suicides in casinos are nightly occurrences as he discussed what he saw as societal costs related to casino gambling.

"Every night somewhere in America, somebody takes their life in a casino because they've wasted the last semblance of dignity and hope that they had," Bevin said. "Families are ruined. Lives are ruined."

A top American Gaming Association executive had previously termed the remarks as "patently false and irresponsible."

The comments resurfaced Saturday night amid one of several combative exchanges between Bevin and Beshear. The Democrat said the governor's remarks were another example of

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Bevin's false statements as they argued over Kentucky's settlement with the manufacturer of the prescription painkiller OxyContin.

Bevin claims Beshear profited from Kentucky's settlement with the drug company as a partner at a law firm that defended the company. Beshear denies any involvement in the \$24 million settlement — reached by his predecessor in office — and notes that as attorney general he's sued multiple opioid makers and distributors.

"This is just more of the same from a governor who says that someone commits suicide on a casino floor every night," Beshear said.

Bevin replied: "I don't know where this comment about the casinos is. I've never said anything like that in my life. That's absolute malarkey."

Beshear responded that Bevin's remarks were on tape.

"No, it isn't on tape," Bevin countered. "You're not telling the truth. Again, the truth matters. And if it's on tape, I want you to produce that tape and show people where I said this happens on the floor of casinos."

Beshear pounded away at the governor's denial on Sunday, attaching Bevin's audiotaped remarks in a social media post that said: "You asked for the tape, so we found it for you."

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"Kentuckians deserve a governor who respects them enough to not deny the very things they've said," Beshear said.

Bevin's campaign did not immediately respond to an email and a text seeking comments.

Technically, Beshear's claim that the governor referred to suicides on casino floors was off the mark. Bevin referred to casinos in general in the interview with the Cadiz, Kentucky, radio station.

It wasn't the first time Bevin was accused of exaggerating the consequences of moves by his opponents. When teachers swarmed Kentucky's Capitol to protest pension and education proposals he supported, the governor twice associated their absence from classrooms with harm to children, offering no evidence in either instance. Bevin felt compelled to apologize the first time but then made the second unfounded assertion to criticize another statehouse rally.

The candidates have two more scheduled debates. Bevin also is expecting a visit on the eve of the Nov. 5 election from President Donald Trump at a rally in Lexington, Kentucky.

Read more <http://www.startribune.com/kentucky-gov-s-race-stirs-clash-over-casino-suicide-cla>

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