

Bad Bet on the Bayou: The Rise of Gambling in Louisiana and the Fall of Governor Edwin Edwards

Tyler Bridges

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Louisiana is our most exotic state. It is religious and roguish, a place populated by Cajuns, Creoles, Rednecks, and Bible-thumpers. It is a state that loves good food, good music, and good times. *Laissez les bons temps rouler* -- let the good times roll -- is the unofficial motto. Louisiana is also excessively corrupt.

In the 1990s, it plunged headlong into legalized gambling, authorizing more games of chance than any other state. Leading the charge was Governor Edwin Edwards, who for years had flaunted his fondness for cold cash and high-stakes gambling, and who had used his razor-sharp mind and catlike reflexes to stay one step ahead of the law. Gambling, Edwin Edwards, and Louisiana's political culture would prove to be a combustible mix.

Bad Bet on the Bayou tells the story of what happened when the most corrupt industry came to our most corrupt state. It is a sweeping morality tale about commerce, politics, and what happens when the law catches up to our most basic human desires and frailties.



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