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For Immediate Release:

Advocacy His Strongest Defense

Veteran Now Fights For Charities

A soldier to the core. That's how one could describe **Will Martin**. And he's mad. Fighting mad. A decorated veteran, since retired, he's tempered his anger. All he wants to do now is level the playing field, make it a fair fight, not in a war zone, but the gambling landscape, which rakes in billions of dollars for the state of Texas.

His cause, charitable bingo. His M.O. lobbying efforts – aimed to protect and preserve charities, which in turn, enrich the lives of countless others. Martin serves as co-executive director of **Conservative Texans For Charitable Bingo**, a nonprofit group of Texas charities and supporters forged to help fund local charities through the game of bingo, as regulated by the state.

“More than 900 charities across Texas raise money for children, veterans, education, fine arts, special needs citizens and more,” according to **Angela Hale**, who also serves as co-executive director. “Total charitable proceeds for the people of Texas now exceed more than \$1 billion dollars,” she said.

Witnessing Martin in action, she offers high praise.

In addition to the Bingo Advisory Committee, appointed by the Charitable Bingo Operations Division of the Texas Lottery Commission, Martin serves as chairman of the Legislative Commission for the American Legion Department of Texas and as vice commander for District 9 American Legion.

“He is an incredibly effective advocate for charitable bingo,” said Hale, who first met Martin in 2016, when recruited to help the organization. “He is our leader and advocate and **one of the most effective advocates** I have ever met standing up and fighting for veterans in our state. We have worked together closely almost every day ever since. He is a an incredible mentor, leader and someone I admire, respect and look up to and I appreciate his service to our country,” she said.

And, she and others are only too eager to join the fight – often found in formation with Martin on the steps of the Texas capitol to lobby for charitable bingo rights.

In fact, they are bound by a sense of duty.

“We believe charitable bingo is a conservative idea – especially when budgets are tight in the legislative sessions. We believe local communities should take care of those less fortunate in their communities through fund-raising activities. Many people give their time and talents to help charitable causes, but raising funds for local charity needs cannot be done alone through bake sales and raffles. They simply do not raise enough money for the needs in a community.”

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A cause, she added, that benefits everyone.

“We believe communities should be able to take care of their own local needs through this volunteer game of bingo instead of more government and higher taxes. Everyone wins in bingo, local charities, players, businesses and even government through taxes it receives, reduction in social spending, and more money in the local economy,” she said.

To learn more, Video King enlisted Martin to give us his perspective, a bit about his background, and what makes this Texan fight so hard for their cause. **Or in his words ... “Why I put on my boots and go and continue begging the politicians for help for charitable bingo ...”**

- **Where You Call Home:** I was born in Wharton, Texas, raised in Wallis, and now live in Victoria.
- **Military Service:** I enlisted in 1965 in to the U.S. Navy. After boot camp in San Diego, I was assigned to a Navy Construction Battalion. In other words, I became a Navy Seabee.
- **Area Of Expertise:** I was a steelworker, anything that was built from steel was part of my job. I served on active duty till 1969.
- **Call To Duty:** The reason that I enlisted was that all of my family has always served this great country. I still serve this country through a few veterans organizations. (Martin is a lifetime member of Vietnam Veterans of America, American Legion, U.S. Navy Seabee Veterans of America and Disabled American Veterans.)
- **Biggest Impact:** As a petty officer in the Navy I learned teamwork, and that we always took care of each other, and I carry that trait on till this day with the utmost dedication.
- **Life As A Civilian:** After completing my four years active duty and returning home I went to work in the Texas oilfield and remained there for 25 years. After retiring from the oilfield, my next job was selling agricultural tires for farming equipment. After 16 years of selling tires, I decided to retire and stay home.
- **Call To Serve - Again:** It was around 2001 that I had the time to really become involved in veterans groups. Since then, I have held the position of treasurer for the Vietnam Veterans of America. In the American Legion I have held the officer positions of First Vice Commander, Finance Officer, Public Relations Officer, Officer on the Executive Committee, District Vice Commander and Chairman of the Legislative Committee for the Department of Texas.
- **On the Home Front:** I am happily married to my wife, Marilyn, and we have four children and 10 grandchildren. Lest I forget, we also have three dogs that are a big part of our family.
- **Other Interests:** My hobbies include going to my grandchildren’s events, whether it’s a Friday night football game, a powerlifting meet, school play or regional orchestra contest. I also like competing in rifle and pistol matches even though my eyes are not what they used to be. Shooting and reloading ammo is not only a hobby, but that is also how I unwind.
- **Your Mission Accomplished:** I dream of charities in the United States of America making so much money from charitable bingo that they accomplish all their goals.
- **What Inspires You:** I am inspired that there are still young men and women, who are patriotic enough to volunteer for military service and the young men and women who are ambitious enough to work and take care of their families without government help.

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- **Cause For Concern:** What saddens me is the thought process of the politicians in the State of Texas. We as veterans volunteered to serve this great country, nobody had to come and beg us to serve or lobby us to serve. We did it because it was the right thing to do. But if the veterans of this State of Texas want something, we have to go to Austin and beg like dogs for it.

- **Biggest Barriers:** In the State of Texas illegal game rooms run rampant on every corner, and the legislature has never done anything to shut them down. They receive absolutely zero tax dollars from them. These illegal game rooms breed crime. They are fronts for drug cartels to launder money; they are run by human smugglers/traffickers. They bring prostitution, armed robbery and money counterfeiting to all the communities.

On the other hand when the veterans organizations ask for a new type game for bingo, they scream that it is an expansion of gambling. I have spent untold hours at the Capitol begging for help for charitable bingo that helps our veterans, their children and others in our community.

- **Charitable Impact:** I will tell you about a veteran that suffered from a disease that slowly paralyzes your whole body. He and his wife lived out in the country where they had no neighbors. After the veteran's condition became so severe, his wife could no longer manage to load him in the car for his doctors' appointments. She told us that it would cost approximately \$5,000 to purchase and have installed a device that she could use to safely load him in the car.

She said that she had saved up \$1,800. The American Legion Post here in Victoria supplied her with the rest of the money. I recently received a phone call from the wife who explained to me that it so easy now to take the veteran to all his appointments and that now once a week she is able to drive him to the Dairy Queen for a soda and that makes him very happy.

Can you imagine being in a situation where going to the drive-thru at the local Dairy Queen once a week is anticipated with great joy? I wish that we could make billions of dollars from charitable bingo to help all veterans and their children.

That is why I put on my boots and go and continue begging the politicians for help for charitable bingo.

- **Why Bingo:** I first became acquainted with bingo when my wife went to work at a commercial bingo hall. I first played bingo as a youngster at a church fundraiser. I think the game of bingo will be around forever IF members of legislature will quit regulating it to death.

- **Legislative Action:** In Texas, the Bingo Enabling Act was passed in 1983, and the politicians have done nothing to let bingo come into the next century. We need to bring bingo into the age of computers and electronics because we have a population that lives with cell phones and other electronic devices.

The bingo industry in Texas is still using rotary phones and party lines. I am co-Executive Director of a group named Conservative Texans for Charitable Bingo. We have a bill this session HB 1186 being carried by Rep. John Kuempel called the "Carry Over Pull Tab Bill" that would benefit the charities of the State of Texas greatly.

- **On The Local Front:** I am Chairman of the Charities at Palace Bingo in Victoria. Our average attendance has dropped dramatically at all the bingo halls in Victoria, because of the illegal game rooms. Please let me explain, in the State of Texas, it is a Class A misdemeanor to operate an illegal game room that has slot machine-type devices. They operate with no regulation and a Class A misdemeanor is like a speeding ticket, so if the police raid them and shut them down they open back up in two or three days.

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Some of these game rooms have up to 150 machines. Our legislative body in Austin has done nothing to shut them down, but the bingo industry, which is regulated by the Texas Lottery Commission, will fine a charity lots of money for any small infraction.

I have spent the last six years talking to legislative members, and there are a few that are actually there to help charitable groups like the veterans organizations. I will keep knocking on their doors at the Capitol until my old legs give up, and then I will use the phone.

- **United Front:** I do thank God for my health, and I thank God for the great people at Video King, which manufacture equipment to help the bingo industry and pass along some of their great information on what has worked and helps charitable bingo groups in other states.

Texans Helping Texans

Founded in 2005, **Texas Charity Advocates** is another statewide association that promotes bingo to the benefit of the nearly 1,000 charitable organizations. Dedicated to the betterment of Texas Charitable Bingo, their mission is to promote bingo and advocate for changes in the way it's governed and regulated in the state.

A study presented by TCA in 2019 showed the game creates almost half-billion dollars in total economic activity in Texas, supports almost 3,000 direct and indirect jobs, while bingo halls across the state awarded nearly \$600 million in prizes to their playing customers in 2017.

Four hundred members strong and growing, TCA is made up of charities and others, licensed to operate bingo games in Texas.

To learn more, call (214) 236-5016, or visit www.texascharityadvocates.com.

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