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## Hutchinson criticizes Beebe over predatory lending

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LITTLE ROCK (AP) -- Republican gubernatorial nominee Asa Hutchinson accused Democratic rival Mike Beebe of being ineffective in fighting predatory lenders, and questioned Beebe's accepting contributions from payday lenders.

Beebe, the state's attorney general, described Hutchinson's criticism as "one more Washington-style attack."

Hutchinson on Thursday accused Beebe of creating a conflict of interest by accepting contributions from payday lenders while working as attorney general. Hutchinson cited \$4,000 in contributions Beebe has received from payday lenders.

Hutchinson accused Beebe of failing to take action against predatory lenders.

"While working families and our state's most vulnerable citizens are being targeted by unscrupulous lenders, Mike Beebe has essentially sat on his hands while accepting the lenders' money for his campaigns," Hutchinson said.

Hutchinson said he supports revoking the 1999 Check Cashers Act, which allows payday lenders to charge fees and interest rates in excess of the state's usury limit of 17 percent.

Hutchinson said that provision leads to borrowers paying triple-digit interest rates on short-term loans.

Beebe's campaign noted that in the Legislature, Beebe voted against the Check Cashers Act in 1999 and voted for its repeal in 2001.

"I'm glad Asa Hutchinson is finally back in Arkansas and has come around to support Beebe's position," said Zac Wright, a spokesman for Beebe.

Hutchinson on Thursday also urged supporters to donate money to help keep his statewide television ads, launched earlier this month, on the air.

"I have no doubt that my opponent will launch negative attack ads in the coming weeks in an effort to kill our momentum," Hutchinson said in an e-mail newsletter to supporters. "We're not going to let him get away with it."

Beebe's campaign dismissed Hutchinson's comments and said the former congressman is the one going negative.

"Today's absurd Washington attack by Hutchinson is proof that although Mike Beebe has a positive vision for Arkansas, Asa Hutchinson can't offer anything but bad information and negative, Washington-style politics," Wright said.