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arkansas business news story**For Shame (Editorial)**

By Arkansas Business Staff

3/5/2007

Seven members of the Senate Commerce & Insurance Committee were neither strong enough to fight the loan sharks nor brave enough to actually vote against a bill to protect Arkansas consumers from the scourge of payday lenders. Instead, they just didn't vote.

Five members — Paul Miller, D-Melbourne; Percy Malone, D-Arkadelphia; Barbara Horn, D-Foreman; Robert Johnson, D-Bigelow; and Paul Bookout, D-Jonesboro — were present but didn't vote. President Pro Tempore Jack Critcher, D-Batesville, and Terry Smith, D-Hot Springs, conveniently managed to be out of the room when it came time to vote. Nice try, guys, but protecting your constituents and neighbors from predators should have been a priority.

Only Sen. Jim Argue, D-Little Rock, had the courage of his convictions. Here's hoping at least four of these wimps will find the strength to join him in criminalizing usurious lending when the bill comes up again. If not, you'll know whom to blame — the bill sailed through the House and would likely do the same in the Senate if these enablers would get out of the way.

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