

# Powerball prize grows to historic \$800 million, residents try their hand at lottery winnings

by Madelaine Gerard, Staff Writer  
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**ALTON/EDWARDSVILLE** - At approximately **9:59 CST** this **Saturday** evening, there is a chance that one or several Americans nationwide will be holding their ticket to unimaginable riches— and one of those lucky people could be someone in the River Bend.

As the **Powerball** prize raises to a historic **\$800 million**, the highest in the history of the U.S.'s lottery games, residents from around the area are grasping at their chance of earning a fortune with a two dollar “quick pick” from their local convenience stores.



“It’s been absolutely insane,” **Morgan Kutter** said as she worked her shift at the **Casey’s General Store in Wood River**. “We have been selling tickets non stop since I got here.”

Of course, Kutter herself felt inclined to get in on the action, having bought her **Illinois Lottery** ticket after finding out no one had hit the **\$450 million Powerball** prize that was announced on **Wednesday**.

An assistant manager at one of the busiest **Edwardsville** quick shops said the Powerball tickets have been popular to say the least.

“People are just hopeful they will win,” she said. “These tickets sell regardless, but the media buzz makes a big difference promoting this is the largest Powerball jackpot ever. Some folks joke about their chances or lack of, but folks here come in quickly and don’t get into a whole lot of emotion or overexcitement. I don’t remember purchases of any lottery or Powerball tickets to this extreme; they are pretty heavily purchased right now.”

With the prize so astronomically high, some believe it would be foolish not to at least gamble a simple two dollars for a chance to become a near-billionaire.

If one or several lucky Americans win the grand prize, they will have a choice of taking the full \$800 million in an annuity which is paid out over 30 years. However, most lottery winners take the lump-sum payment and will receive an estimated **\$496 million**.

For those who prefer to look toward the statistical chance of winning, the **Multi-State Lottery Association** says that the odds of having the winning Powerball ticket are **1 in 292.2 million**. Unfortunately, that means you may as well be throwing those two dollars you spent on the ticket out the window. In this statistical sense, you have a better chance of getting struck by lightning (1 in 134,000), becoming the U.S. president (1 in 10 million) or even being born with extra fingers or toes (1 in 500).



That should not be the end-all-be-all to your lottery endeavors. In Wednesday's case, there was no winning ticket and the lottery winnings were rolled over into the new massive jackpot. If that were to occur again, a new prize, expected to shatter the one billion mark, will be announced and the winning numbers will be revealed on **Wednesday, Jan. 13.**

Data collected by the **Federal Reserve** and the **U.S. Census Bureau** states that the average U.S. household is carrying about \$130,000 worth of debt. If one won the lottery and responsibly paid off all of their debts, they would have barely even scratched the surface of their winnings.

From there, what they could do with the remaining cash can only be thought of in one's wildest dreams. They could live more than comfortably for the rest of their lives or for their children's children's lives, for that matter. Would they give some money to charity, fund their family members educations or spend it on luxurious clothing, vehicles or homes?

The question is sure to come to anyone's mind after they hear of the astounding prize—What you do with \$800 million?

Everyone at [RiverBender.com](http://RiverBender.com) is excited to hear what comes out of Saturday night's drawing and wishall of our readers the best of luck. We will keep you updated if a winner pops up in the River Bend and beyond.

[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)