

## No new day in politics

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**By Steve Flowers**

When Barack Obama first ran for president, he campaigned on a pledge that his tenure in office would be a new day in American politics. It was perceived that the policies of prior presidential years of graft and political favoritism would be a thing of the past. The reality of this administration has revealed just the opposite. This Obama team has painted a portrait of political cronyism unparalleled in the annals of American political folklore. The fact is that Obama has made many of his predecessors look like novices when it comes to favoritism and chicanery.

This should be no surprise since he hails from and is a product of the shady world of Chicago politics. No place in America can hold a candle to the seedy side of Chicago political sleaze. Not even Louisiana or New Jersey can compare to Chicago. These three venues thrive on and boast of and are proud of their corruption, past and present.

Obama immediately surrounded himself with his Chicago political pals. He relies most heavily on his chief lieutenants, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Attorney General Eric Holder.

Holder essentially has immunity for his actions since it is difficult to indict and convict the Attorney General. He recently directed the Justice Department to divert further millions of the BP oil spill money to Louisiana and Florida since they are the only two states affected that also have a Democratic Senator. The other three states, Alabama, Mississippi and Texas, have only Republican U.S. Senators.

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The most brazen and corrupt scheme concocted by Obama's ultra liberal administration has been to give millions of federal dollars to hundreds of newly formed green corporations on the left west coast to create new green ways to create energy. Most of these Obama funded green companies have now gone out of business after pocketing millions of dollars of direct federal grants.

These ventures have been given 100% grants of your federal tax dollars. These grants have been doled out to his left wing cronies to spend, squander or pocket as they wished. These political payouts were given so that these new California green entrepreneurs could compete with traditional American energy sources and companies. All of these longtime energy-producing states are by the way solidly red Republican states.

The Obama administration has declared and enacted full-scale war on the coal producing states of West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee and Alabama. It may come as a surprise to some of you to learn that our state is one of the most prominent coal producing states in America. However, if you hail from Jefferson, Walker or Winston counties you know how important coal production is to Alabama.

Alabama currently ranks 15th in coal production in the United States. There are 4,300 Alabamians employed directly by the Coal Industry. These coal employees make an average annual wage of \$85,000, including benefits. This amounts to an annual gross payroll in Alabama of \$425 million. The peripheral spinoff of jobs from coal production adds another 16,000 jobs to the 4,300 directly employed folks.

Other industries in the state are significantly impacted by the coal industry. For example, the railroad industry's largest customer in the state is the coal industry. Freight shipped by railroad and barge in Alabama amounts to \$250 million annually. Other suppliers, such as fuel, electric power, equipment, tires and repair parts, receive \$800 million a year from the coal industry.

Stewart Burkhalter, a longtime leader of Alabama's organized labor movement, recently took on the left wing environmental groups that Obama sides with on the energy issues. Burkhalter says not only is coal one of the lowest cost fuels available for power generation, it also creates a lot of union jobs in Alabama. Most of the men and women responsible for the day-to-day operations of Alabama power plants are IBEW members.

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Environmental groups that think we should shut down coal-fired power plants and replace them with expensive solar or wind-generated power are not in touch with economic reality. Renewable power mandates would force us to import a product that is currently being produced by Alabama workers. Importing sparsely available solar or wind-generated electricity would cause Alabamians' electricity rates to skyrocket. It might be good for California to experiment with our tax dollars but it would hamper our state's ability to attract new industry.

Coal is good for Alabama.