

Who will be the next state office holders to resign?

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By **BOB MARTIN, Publisher**

Speculation in some Montgomery circles is that both Attorney General Luther Strange and Speaker of the House Mike Hubbard will be resigning in the very near future.

I am told that Sonny Reagan, one of Strange's deputy attorney generals has already left or has told friends he is planning to leave.

This information comes as two key members of Hubbard's House Leadership Team packed up their duds and departed the legislative chambers. House General Fund budget chairman Republican Jim Barton is leaving to join a Montgomery lobbying firm The Kinney Capitol Group, whose lobbying clients include the Alabama Retail Association, the Poarch Band of Creek Indians, Alabama Beer Association, Alabama Dental Association, American Suntanning Association, Best Friends, the Humane Society of the United States, and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

Barton's departure follows the resignation of fellow state Rep. Jay Love, a Montgomery Republican who was chairman of the House education budget committee. Love stepped down just over two weeks ago to enter into private business ventures.

Alabama Attorney General Luther Strange has engaged in a lengthy extramarital affair with his former campaign manager, sources have told a popular political blog in the state, which reports

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that the affair appears to be ongoing.

Jessica Medeiros Garrison divorced Tuscaloosa City Councilman Lee Garrison in October 2009, roughly one year before Strange won his race for attorney general. Their son, Michael Lee Garrison, was born on March 27, 2007. The Garrisons became entangled in a protracted court battle over custody, and Luther Strange's name plays a prominent role in that case, the blog reports.

Strange has been married to his current spouse more than 30 years, and they have two sons.

Strange also arranged for Ms. Garrison to purchase a house in Mountain Brook, one of the most desirable neighborhoods in the Birmingham metro area. The house is not huge--property records show it has 2,213 square feet, but it has plenty of what real-estate agents call "curb appeal." That, plus its setting in the prestigious Mountain Brook School System, lift its appraised value to \$439,900 according to the blog, written by Roger Schuler, a former employee of UAB Medical Center.

Hubbard's problems

Speaker Hubbard's problems stem from the fact that a Special Grand Jury in the Capital City has subpoenaed records from him dealing with time he spent as Chair of the State Republican Party.

It has been reported that a Special Grand Jury in Montgomery, led by the Public Corruption unit of the Attorney General's office, is compiling documents that would have a bearing on his time as GOP Chair.

The whole matter appears to be over a matter connected to the State GOP hiring a Florida Company to design and produce glossy campaign brochures and other political material for the State GOP. The Florida Company, Majority Strategies, was paid over \$800,000.

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Once the contract was put into effect Majority Strategies hired Hubbard's company, Craftmasters Printing in Auburn, to handle the printing, shipping and mailing costs.

Medicare expansion provides Georgia with jobs

Retirement Systems of Alabama Chief David Bronner says Georgia is projected to create 70,000 new jobs from Medicaid expansion. He concludes that since Alabama has half the population of Georgia, Medicaid expansion could possibly generate 35,000 new jobs for Alabama. "Even if expansion of Medicaid only created 17,500 jobs, that would still be the largest influx of new jobs in Alabama's history," he adds.

Bronner says that adding \$15-17 billion, about \$1.5 billion per year, to Alabama's economy is a big deal that helps all 67 counties with the federal government paying 90 percent of it.

"If someone comes to you and says invest \$1 billion (\$771 million is supposed to be the number) and gives you \$15 billion back, it is a great deal. I will take the deal all day long. Alabama pays nothing for \$1.5 billion in each of 2014, 2015 and 2016. It is not until 2020 that Alabama pays its 10 percent share."

He is telling the leaders of Alabama to "Get over it. Let's do what is right and responsible for Alabama and its citizens."

Bronner's right, Dr. Bentley. Don't turn your back on the poor and suffering in our state.