

What is Hubbard's fate?

Written by News Desk
Thursday, 02 January 2014 15:36 -



By [Bob Martin](#) , Publisher

On Friday the 13th day of September, 2013 with Bo Jackson in the audience, Auburn University President Jay Gogue proclaimed the opening of the schools newest building, a \$29 million structure which would be named The Mike Hubbard Center for Advanced Science, Innovation and Commerce.

The 84,000-square-foot facility contains labs and equipment that cover five areas of research that include biofuel development, food safety and engineering, ecosystems, genomics and informatics and water quality and quantity.

"Without his (Hubbard's) help, this project would never have happened," commented the dean of the College of Agriculture, William Batchelor. What Hubbard did, primarily because he was Speaker of the State House of Representatives, was secure \$14.1 million in state funds to match a federal grant for the building's construction. That's the power you have when you control one half of one of the state's three branches of government.

However, it was the same week of Hubbard's praise from Auburn University officials that the Speaker hired lawyers to defend his interests from what might arise in a State Grand Jury convened in Lee County to investigate political corruption among other matters, in the legislature. It has been speculated, based on those lobbyists and politicians seen coming and going from the Lee County Courthouse that the Grand Jury is investigating legislative-related

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activities in addition to Speaker Hubbard.

Most speculation is that Hubbard's political contributions and those of legislators in general are the focus of the grand jury.

State records reveal that the Speaker has about a quarter-of-a-million dollars in his campaign war chest, the majority coming from the business community via direct contributions and political action committees (PACS).

Cobb won't run, Sen. Beasley may

Former State Chief Justice Sue Bell Cobb told Inside Alabama Politics (IAP), a sister publication of The Montgomery Independent, this week that she would not run for governor, at least in the 2014 election cycle. "My daughter is a senior in high school and I am fully occupied with my family," she said after consulting with her husband Bill about the question. IAP reports that this was her first public comment on her possible candidacy in several months "but there are indications that she had already informed the powers in Democratic Party circles that she wouldn't be a candidate.

Cobb's announcement clears a big possible hurdle for State Sen. Billy Beasley of Clayton who has said he has begun a thought process about the race and would make a decision by the end of the year. The end of the year ends before this column will be published, but I think it would be a safe bet to assume that the younger brother of Montgomery lawyer, Jere Beasley, will toss his hat in the ring.

Questions about who will be candidate for the Democrats always centers about the question of contributions and who can raise the necessary funding to challenge an incumbent governor. Beasley told IAP that if he couldn't raise the funds he's not "going down that road to finance it himself.

IAP reports that "Beasley's passion for the issues, especially Medicaid expansion, is a strong indicator he's getting ready to toss his hat in the ring. Imagine the debate between Gov.

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Bentley, the former Tuscaloosa physician and Beasley, the small town pharmacist – the Republican governor who refuses to expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act – and the Democratic state lawmaker with high name recognition who will push hard in the upcoming Regular session and on the campaign trail to expand Medicaid. It could be a classic."

Byrne gets congressional seat

Former two-year college chancellor Bradley Byrne was elected with ease in a special election for Congress and will take office in January. Byrne told supporters in Alabama he would be heading to Washington within hours after winning a special congressional election.

Byrne, who defeated Democrat Burton LeFlore, is scheduled to be sworn in Jan. 7. The congressional seat has been vacant since Jo Bonner resigned to take a job with the state university system. "We have three weeks to organize the congressional office in Washington and down here in the district and get on top of the big issues," he told supporters and campaign staff. "Usually a congressman has two months to do that. We have three weeks with Christmas and New Year's in the middle of it. We have a lot of work to do."

Byrne, who lost the Republican primary for governor in 2010, pledges to be a "conservative reformer."

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