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THE INDEPENDENT VOICE OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY SINCE 1912

Judge won't discuss hearing

After-hours court for Lawrence D.A. worker, husband rare, sheriff, other officials say

By Nancy Glasscock
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MOULTON — District Judge Randy Mullican refused to answer questions about an after-hours hearing he held for an employee of the Lawrence County district attorney's office and her husband.

Heather June Fleming, 32, and Bart Fleming, 36, spent less than 90 minutes in jail Oct. 17, after they were arrested on third-degree domestic violence charges.

Alabama law requires those accused of domestic violence to stay 12 hours in jail before making bond, unless they appear before a judge.

Mullican wouldn't disclose procedural details of the hearing, including the time it was held or who requested it. District Attorney Jim Osborne and Circuit Clerk Harce Hill each said they didn't know any details about the hearing.

Sheriff Gene Mitchell said hearings like the one held for

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RIVERFRONT

Making progress

Decatur's Progress Bank obtains enough commitments to meet capital requirements. B1

LOCAL

Planning Commission OKs increase of off-street parking. B2



TODAY'S WEATHER, A2

High: 63 Low: 50
Cooler. Mostly cloudy with a chance of showers. Chance of rain 55 percent.

AREA DEATHS

Alonzo Aldridge, California
Jessie Baker, Decatur
James Farris, Moulton
Imogene Guest, Somerville
Bill Knight, Huntsville
W.P. Newman, Hartselle
Raleigh Richason, Falkville
Mildred Wainscott, Falkville

Death notices, obituaries, page B5

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Decatur, Alabama 96th year,
No. 241, 62 pages



Ex-Siegelman lawyer says Washington steered case

Former governor's prosecutor disputes Jones' testimony to panel

By Ben Evans
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — A former lawyer for Don Siegelman told a congressional committee Tuesday that Washington officials — not local prosecutors — appeared to be steering the case against the former Democratic Alabama governor.

Doug Jones, a former U.S. attorney in the Clinton administration who later defended Siegelman, said he believes local prosecutors were in control early on.



Jones

"All of this was absolutely stunning and a complete reversal of what we had been told only a few months before," Jones said at a House hearing on

But he said after the case appeared to stall in 2004 and prosecutors hinted that it may be dropped, Washington officials became much more involved and were "fishing around for anything they could find."

■ Riley's son's affidavit to House committee denies claims by former GOP attorney, A4.

■ Former GOP attorney general critical of Justice Department, A4.

whether the Bush administration has used the justice system for partisan gains. "It was not a review. It was as if the case started all over again."

Louis Franklin, the chief prosecutor in the case, disputed Jones' testimony later in the day, saying he and other ca-

reer prosecutors in Montgomery always directed the prosecution and that no one ever suggested that it might be dropped.

"We never told him that we were backing off of that case. Not at any point did we ever say that," Franklin said in a phone interview. "I made him aware that we had a strong case and we were moving forward unless they showed us something proving that we're looking at this the wrong way."

Franklin said Justice's Office of

Please see **Siegelman**, page A4

A little work, peace and relaxation at Wheeler



Daily photo by Brennen Smith

Though required to work 24 hours a week as volunteers, Judy and Lee Bransford still find plenty of time to relax at Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge with their German shepherd, Taylor, and Shih Tzu, Jasmine. The refuge gives them a free place to live in exchange for volunteer hours.

Enjoying the Refuge life

Free RV parking not the only perk for resident volunteers

By Paul Huggins
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The chatter of songbirds blends with rustling maple leaves that can't quite hide the retiring sun.

The aroma of roasting oak fills the cool autumn air as Lee Bransford's German shepherd finally catches up with a rubber ball just before it bounces over the banks

of Flint Creek. Judy Bransford sits content in a lounge chair and gently strokes the Shi Tzu in her lap.

Ahhh! This is the life. Peace and quiet and surrounded by nature with a clear blue sky overhead. It's living free.

The Bransfords' refuge is actually Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge, and the best part of all is their home costs nothing.

Well, the Bransfords would say the zero rent they pay is hardly the best part of their set-up, and they did pay a pretty penny for their 33-foot travel trailer.

Stress-free living

But the free place to park their home on wheels is a great perk and worth the time

they give in exchange for its picturesque location. It's stress-free living, they said, but the cost comes with sacrifices.

The Bransfords are the fourth installment of a new resident volunteer program Wheeler started last year. They parked their RV here Oct. 1 and will remain until Dec. 21. The refuge, in turn, gets 24 hours of volunteer service each week, specifically having one or both of them work the information desk at the refuge's Visitors Center on weekends.

"The main reason I did this is I was so excited to work at the refuge," she said.

Her excitement is matched by Teresa Adams, supervisory refuge ranger, who

Riley seeking tougher DUI law

By M.J. Ellington
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MONTGOMERY — Gov. Bob Riley said the state needs to fix a 2006 drunk driving law that ended up lightening, not stiffening punishment for repeat offenders.

On Tuesday, Riley, along with district attorneys, state troopers, activists and lawmakers, said he wants legislation in 2008 to correct the mistakes in the earlier law.

Riley said he wants the Legislature to enact laws mandating stiffer punishment for drivers with blood alcohol levels of .15 or higher, almost double the level of .08 at



Riley

which Alabama considers a driver intoxicated. He also wants longer minimum sentences for offenders with four or more convictions for driving while intoxicated. About 39 states have similar laws.

Unless Alabama updates its law, it could lose up to \$2 million per year in federal state trooper funds, Riley said. He outlined his plan at a news conference.

"This is not social drinking. It is a callous disregard for human life," said Peggy Batey, executive director of Mothers Against



AP photo by NASA

Smoking California

This image, captured by a NASA satellite Tuesday, shows smoke coming off the numerous wildfires from Santa Barbara, Calif., stretching into Mexico, spreading over the Pacific Ocean. Walls of wind-whipped flames consumed hundreds of homes across tinder-dry Southern California, raising the number of people forced to flee to nearly a million. (Story, A6)

Commissioner tries to put employee back on probation

By Sheryl Marsh
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Morgan County District 1 Commissioner Jeff Clark moved to place Human Resources Director Terry Naccarato back on probation, but a fellow commissioner invoked a rule of procedure.

District 4 Commissioner Stacy George said he believes two people in the County Commission office are trying to get rid of the HR director because he follows the law.

Two weeks ago, George and District 2 Commissioner Ken Livingston voted to suspend the remainder of Naccarato's probation, after receiving a letter from him regarding purported illegal hirings in the Sheriff's Department. District 3 Commissioner Kevin Murphy voted no.

During a work session, Clark said Naccarato is doing a good job and he doesn't understand why the commissioners re-



Clark



George

moved his probation. He said all employees should have the same probation.

Director under fire?

George reminded Clark of the letter about the sheriff's hirings and also said Naccarato was under fire from Chairman John Glasscock and Administrator Syble Atkins.

George said he was told that Glasscock said Naccarato should not have given George one of the letters about the sheriff. He said Glasscock rummaged through commissioner mailboxes in the commission office last month trying to find the letters about the hirings. In ad-

dition, George said Atkins asked the payroll clerk for Naccarato's hire date.

Glasscock denied the actions. "Did you, or did you not, rummage through the mailboxes, John?," George asked.

"I looked in them, but I didn't take nothing out," answered Glasscock.

Atkins said she checked Naccarato's hire date for the media Oct. 9. After the meeting, she said she didn't inquire about his employment date at any other time.

Clark said no one should scold Glasscock and Atkins about the issue because he wants Naccarato back on probation to be fair to other employees.

Clark, who was absent from the Oct. 9 meeting, had an item put on Tuesday's agenda to discuss probationary periods for employees. Clark said he is not against Naccarato and his job is