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Stores get such a boost from Halloween, it's scary **11A**

Riley wants tougher DUI law

By Francis X. Gilpin
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Gov. Bob Riley says legislators in Montgomery must toughen Alabama's drunken-driving law or the state could lose up to \$2 million in federal traffic enforcement funds.



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The changes proposed by the governor Tuesday are designed to lock up more habitual offenders for longer periods.

"We can change people's whole demeanor on the highway," Riley said during a morning news conference at the Capitol.

The governor was flanked by legislators, prosecutors, state troopers and the executive director of the state chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

The officials said Alabama is saddled with a flawed law that prevents judges from considering all prior driving-under-the-influence convictions when a defendant is sentenced on a new DUI charge.

Kenneth E. Davis, district attorney for Russell County, said prosecutors need all the tools they can get to keep repeat offenders off the roads.

"What we have to do is put them in jail, frankly," Davis said.

Riley is proposing legislation that would:

- double the minimum punishment for defendants convicted of driving with a blood alcohol level of .15 or higher;
- require an automatic one-year suspension for first-time offenders with a blood alcohol level of .15 or higher;
- eliminate the five-year limitation on considering prior convictions in the sentencing of habitual DUI offenders; and
- increase the minimum term of imprisonment for a fourth DUI from 10 days to 120 days.

Sen. Rusty Glover, R-Semmes, said Alabama has one of the 10 weakest DUI laws in the nation.

That is because legislators rewrote the law in 2006. Without apparently intending to do so, the rewrite created a loophole for habitual DUI defendants. The Legislature put a five-year limit on how far back prosecutors could go to bring up past DUI convictions at sentencing.

After the state criminal appellate court affirmed that interpretation of the law last month, Attorney General Troy King urged legislators to come up with a fix so repeat DUI offenders cannot benefit from shorter sentences.

Even before that ruling, Riley said he attempted to lift the five-year limit during the 2007 legislative session. But the bill went nowhere in all the political squabbling, he said.

As part of his new legislative package, Riley also wants to make it harder on drivers who are caught with a blood alcohol level of at least .15, almost twice the legal limit at which an automobile operator is presumed to be impaired.

"This is not social drinking," said Peggy Batey, the MADD Alabama executive director. "It's time for Alabama to step up."

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Five Tide players return

By Tim Gayle
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TUSCALOOSA — Five Alabama players suspended in the wake of questions regarding their receipt of textbooks returned to practice Tuesday, though Crimson Tide head football coach Nick Saban offered no insight regarding their future eligibility.

"I don't have any new information on the situation with the five players, other than that they are able to practice," Saban said. "I don't have any new information, so it won't do you any good to ask me anything about it. You'll probably know as soon as I do what we find out."

Offensive linemen Antoine Caldwell and Marlon Davis, tailback Glen Coffee and defensive backs Marquis Johnson and Chris Rogers rejoined the team for the first time since being suspended on the eve of last Saturday's Tennessee game. The five were shielded from media interviews and Alabama officials remain silent while an internal investigation continues.

"They came out and practiced the same way they've practiced all season," safety Rashad Johnson said. "I didn't expect those guys to do anything different. A lot of them are looked up to as leaders, and that's what they're going to continue to do is lead and lead by example. They're just showing that even

if you're not playing, everybody has a role to help the team. And they're doing their role of making everybody else better."

The 22nd-ranked Crimson Tide has an open date this weekend and doesn't resume play until Nov. 3 when it plays Saban's former team, third-ranked LSU, for the lead in the Southeastern Conference West Division standings.

A week off from play won't affect the investigation, now in its fifth day.

Alabama officials have declined comment since Saturday when athletic director Mal Moore on Saturday called the suspensions "a measure aimed at dealing with the facts as we know them at this

time." While no one is discussing the facts, a release issued by the university's media relations department on Monday outlined the method of supplying the university's student-athletes with textbooks. Athletes go to the University Supply Store at Ferguson Center and offer their student identification number and are presented with books that are assembled according to their registration of classes for each semester.

No money ever changes hands and the athletes simply have the loan of the books for each semester. The term "impermissible receipt of

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Photos by Mickey Welsh Advertiser



Schoolchildren ring in Red Ribbon Week

Mayor Bobby Bright, surrounded by members of the Chisholm Elementary School student council, applauds during his visit to the school Tuesday. The visit was part of Red Ribbon Week, a time when students pledge to stay away from drugs and alcohol. Left, second-grade pupil Vanessa Love, plays the triangle during the program. Right, a group of second-graders play instruments. More photos at montgomeryadvertiser.com.



Butler County United Fund might fold

By Alvin Benn
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GREENVILLE — The Butler County United Fund can't meet its annual goal of \$55,000 and will have to fold after more than 50 years of philanthropy and volunteerism unless it gets help from the Montgomery-based River Region United Way, another non-profit network.

The United Fund isn't soliciting funds for 2008 and will notify its 24 recipient agencies by the end of the year that it is ceasing operations, board member Allen Stephenson said Tuesday afternoon.

"We're heartsick over what has happened," he said. "We've just been backed into a corner, and the last thing we want to do is mislead our agencies."

The United Fund has had trouble raising money for several years, Stephenson said, and had to tap its contingency account to meet its goal the past two years.

"It's been a terrible struggle for us," he said.

At one time, International Paper Co. contributed roughly \$27,500, or half of the United Fund's annual goal. The giant packaging maker

no longer participates, according to Stephenson, "and that has really hurt us."

"They've been in talks about a possible sale, and we haven't been able to rely on them," he said.

United Fund and River Region United Way officials plan to meet next month in Greenville to discuss the possibility of a partnership. Though their missions are similar, the United Fund and United Way are different organizations.

"I think there's every possibility in the world that we can help save what they have down there,"

said Charlie Colvin, executive director of the River Region United Way.

The River Region United Way helped the United Way in Troy about three years ago when it appeared in danger of closing, he said.

"What we can do for Butler County is handle many of the administrative duties that take time away from actual solicitation of funds," Colvin said. "We're going to do all we can to keep the Butler

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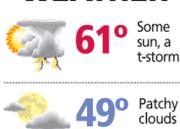


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WEATHER



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49° Patchy clouds

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Wildfires force more evacuations in California **4B**



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