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SINCE 1829

Board's personnel dispute linked to 911 call

By Jill Nolin and Lauren Bowar

A personnel matter that for months has disrupted the activities of the Montgomery County Community Corrections board involves a high-ranking employee who used a Taser on her husband during an argument, according to a 911 call and a memo obtained by the Montgomery Advertiser.

mains unresolved after the governing board could not vote on the issue at a recent meeting because it lost its quorum. It appears that this issue is the creation of a job called "administrator and coordinator of quality assurance and compliance."

The Montgomery County Commission unanimously approved the new position at its Monday meeting but approved it subject to the Authority's ap-

► Listen to the 911 call and read the memo at montgomeryadvertiser.com

proval of the position. County attorney Tyrone Means said the position would not be advertised and the individual would be hired from within the office.

County officials involved with the issue have deferred all comments to Means, who said

he was limited on what he could say about the incident.

But police records and a 911 recording obtained by the Montgomery Advertiser indicate that the personnel matter concerns assistant director Rebecca Johnson, who used her Taser on her husband in their Montgomery home on Aug. 28, 2009.

The county would neither confirm nor deny that Johnson was the subject of the personnel

matter, but a 911 call obtained by the Montgomery Advertiser has a man identifying himself as her husband, saying that she had used the device to stun him.

Police received a 911 call from the Johnson's residence on Aug. 28, 2009, but the caller hung up. A dispatcher then called the residence back to see if police or paramedics were needed, according to the 911 recording. The phone call lasted about one minute.

"No, we're fine. My wife works for the county. And we got in an argument. And she just Tased me, but we're fine," Hal Johnson said to the dispatcher.

"Don't tell them that," a woman could be heard saying in the background.

"Don't send anybody over here, because they're going to embarrass the whole family," Hal Johnson went on to say to

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ALABAMA STARS DESCEND



Contributed

The Blind Boys of Alabama are being honored and will perform at the 2010 Alabama Music Hall of Fame event Thursday at the Renaissance Montgomery Hotel & Spa at the Convention Center. Other award recipients and performers include Montgomery native Jamey Johnson and 1993 inductee Percy Sledge.

'Grammy Awards' event to induct music legends with state ties

By Teri Greene

It's only one night, but what has been dubbed "Alabama's Grammy Awards" is the culmination of a decades-in-the-making process of narrowing down a field of more than a thousand music stars hailing from the state.

Those stars will fall on Montgomery for a second time in two years during Thursday's Alabama Music Hall of Fame induction ceremony and banquet. Hall of Fame director David Johnson calls them "notable achievers" — musicians, producers and behind-

the-scenes stars in the music world who are either natives or have close connections to the state.

"It's a really hard task, because we have already identified over 1,300 notable achievers from Alabama, and of that, a good 30 to 40 percent would qualify for induction," Johnson said.

This year's Alabama Music Hall of Fame inductees are The Blind Boys of Alabama; Bessemer-born Eddie Levert, lead singer of the O'Jays; Buddy Buie, a famed Atlanta singer/songwriter who hails from Dothan; Nashville session musician Jerry Carrigan; producer/musician Paul Hornsby, an Elba

native; the late Muscle Shoals musician Terry Thompson and singer/state Sen. Bobby Denton.

In addition to the inductees, the Hall of Fame gives out contemporary awards to those artists whose work is more current, such as this year's "Rising Star" award winner, Montgerian Jamey Johnson.

Among the other recipients are B.A. Nugent, Governor's award; Michael Coleman, music industry award; Tony Ruffino, Sam Phillips innovator's award; Mac Davis, Jerry Wexler award; Mac McNally, Arthur

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ALL-METRO BASKETBALL Prattville's Dionte Ferguson named Boys 5A-6A Player of the Year

TASK FORCE ON ILLEGAL GAMBLING

Riley says he's disappointed in attorney general

By Sebastian Kitchen

Gov. Bob Riley expressed his deep disappointment Tuesday in the man he appointed attorney general in 2004 and said Troy King has no authority to take over the governor's Task Force on Illegal Gambling.

He also said that King's statement on Monday that he was taking over the task force, relieving the commander of his duties and asking the heads of the state's top law enforcement agencies to temporarily stop raids had succeeded in convincing casinos that had voluntarily closed because of the threat of raids to reopen.

"The casino bosses quickly accepted the attorney general's invitation to reopen," Riley said. "Within a few hours of his announcement yesterday, two closed casinos announced they would reopen because they have his promise of protection. If he had not taken his action yesterday, those illegal casinos would have remained closed — and he knows it."

Riley also warned that "no one who is engaging in illegal gambling in this state should feel like the attorney general has given them a free pass."

Although officials representing White Hall casino said they plan to reopen, Country Crossing near Dothan sent out an e-mail shortly before 10 p.m. on

Tuesday saying that the casino had decided to delay its reopening "because of continued threats and unlawful actions of the governor and his task force."

But Chris Bence, chief of staff for King, said two of the large casinos that have operated in the state during Riley's two terms in office, VictoryLand and Greenetrack, had already opened.

"If the governor will give us the evidence upon which his entire crusade rests, we will immediately go to court and file suit against all of the electronic bingo facilities and get an answer quickly where it counts — from a court," Bence said.

He said it is difficult to understand, if the evidence is so overwhelming, why the task force has not arrested or tried to prosecute one person during the almost 15 months since the task force was formed.

"If, as they say, they have concrete evidence that these facilities are illegal, the most obvious question on everybody's mind becomes why have they chosen not to use it and now why are they refusing to allow the attorney general to use it when he is willing," Bence said.

King asked Tyson on Monday to turn over the evidence within 24 hours. Tyson informed him the evidence is in

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Obama signs health care overhaul into law

By Jennifer Loven

WASHINGTON — Claiming a historic triumph that could define his presidency, a jubilant Barack Obama signed a massive, nearly \$1 trillion health care overhaul on Tuesday that will for the first time cement insurance coverage as the right of every U.S. citizen and begin to reshape the way virtually all Americans receive and pay for treatment.

After more than a year of hyperpartisan struggle — and numerous near-death moments for the measure — Obama declared "a new season in America" as he



See full-page breakdown on what the law does and how it affects you 5A

sealed a victory denied to a line of presidents stretching back more than half a century. Democratic lawmakers cheered him on, giving the White House signing ceremony a rally-like atmosphere as they shouted and snapped photos with pocket

cameras or cell phones.

Not everyone was cheering. The Democrats pushed the bill through Congress without GOP support, and the Republicans said Tuesday that those Democratic lawmakers would pay dearly in this November's elections. Opinion polls show the public remains skeptical, too, and Obama will fly to Iowa on Thursday for the first of a number of appearances that will be more like a continuing sales job than a victory lap.

Aside from the huge, real-life changes in store for many Americans, the White House hopes the victory — even as a companion Senate "fix-it" bill moves through the Senate —

will revitalize an Obama presidency that has been all but preoccupied with health care for his first year and two months in office. Vice President Joe Biden was caught whispering a profanity as he exclaimed to the president what a big deal it was.

Indeed, the reshaping of one-sixth of the U.S. economy, to be phased in over several years, ranks among the biggest changes ever devised by Washington. That was a main complaint from Republicans who characterize the measure as a costly, wrongheaded government power grab. Obama and the Democrats portray it as literally a lifesaver for countless Americans.

New page of national, world news launched today

Local readers today have access to the exclusive reporting of USA Today with a new page of national and international news.

The new Nation/World page, today on page 4C, will appear in the Montgomery Advertiser seven days a week and it will include many more stories than our former Nation/World page.

This new daily page taps into the exclusive reporting and sophisticated editing of USA Today as well as reports from other news services.

Coming up next month: On April 5 we will also use the resources of USA Today to bring readers a new page of baseball news and stats.

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