

CONFIDENCE AND BELIEF'

Crimson Tide men win second straight golf national championship. 1B.



POET, PIONEER

Poet, author, activist
Maya Angelou dies at 86. 2A.

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ALABAMA ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OVERTURNED

BY PHILLIP RAWLS
Associated Press

MONTGOMERY — A Montgomery judge on Wednesday struck down Alabama's tax credits for parents who move their children from failing public schools to private schools.

Judge: Law violates state Constitution in numerous ways

ruled the Alabama Accountability Act violates the Alabama Constitution in several ways, including putting more than one subject in a bill. Proponents said they will appeal the ruling by the Democratic judge before the all-Republican Alabama Supreme Court.

The Republican-controlled Legislature passed the act in February 2013. It started out as a bill to give city and county school systems more flexibility in trying new approaches to education.

Over Democratic objections, the Republican majority expand-

ed the bill to include state income tax credits for parents who move their children from public schools rated as failing to other non-failing public schools or private schools in the transfer program. The expansion also provided 100 percent income tax credits for

companies and individuals for money donated for scholarships to private schools for families below certain income levels.

Proponents said the law offered school choice to students trapped in public schools with a long history of poor performance.

Please see RULING | Page 8A

CLEBURNE COUNTY

MOUNTAIN OF OPINION



Potential wind farm's neighbors have differing views of project

Trent Penny/The Anniston Star/File

A proposed wind farm on the top of Turkey Heaven Mountain in Cleburne County has generated opinions both for and against the project from local landowners.

BY LAURA CAMPER
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Cleburne County Road 852 is a bumpy gravel road that winds past a few scattered homes, a cell tower, airport communication towers and lots of trees as it climbs to the top of Turkey Heaven Mountain.

Thick stands of trees obscure most of the view leading up the mountain, and homes built along the road to take advantage of cleared areas block the rest. But off the road are some hidden ridges that open up to a view which

even on a misty day stretches to Anniston and beyond.

Now, a proposed wind turbine project atop Turkey Heaven Mountain may alter those views, adding spinning blades atop large towers that turn wind into electricity. Some neighbors of the site being considered for the project are opposed to it, saying they worry it will harm their ability to use their own property or their enjoyment of the view. Others welcome the prospect of an environmentally friendly power source or the prospect of economic development. The proposal has drawn heated

opposition from some residents at public meetings, and left at least one family split on the issue.

The project

The project is proposed for areas along County Road 852 at its highest elevations beginning about 1,500 feet from Fred Kitchens' home to where the road intersects with County Road 867. Robin Saiz, a developer with Nations Energy Solutions, said the company is

Please see WIND | Page 8A

New voting machines in place for primaries

BY BRIAN ANDERSON
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New voting machines in Calhoun County should alleviate voters' concerns with computers at the polls during the primary elections Tuesday, according to an election official.

Earlier this month the county picked up a shipment of 56 new machines from Birmingham-based Election Systems and Software. The new machines are an upgrade for the county, said Calhoun County Probate Judge Alice Martin, bringing in new technology as well as a slight modification in marking a ballot — voters will fill in ovals instead of connecting two lines next to the names of their preferred candidates.

The biggest improvement from the old machines is a computer screen that lets voters know their ballot was successfully counted, or explains why there was an error. Lamar Murray, the county's voting machines custodian, said the screen should relieve much of the confusion experienced by voters at the polls.

"Before you would just kind of stand in the booth," Murray said. "You were like, 'Am I done voting?'"

Martin said the new machines weren't brought in due to complaints at the polls, however, but because the old machines were breaking down, and harder to repair. Adam Thompson, the deputy chief of staff for the Alabama Secretary of State's Office, said counties periodically update their machines, but statewide, the technology behind elections hasn't changed much since 2006, when the Help America Vote Act took effect.

"That came out of Bush v. Gore," said Thompson, explaining the act's origins in

Please see VOTING | Page 8A

FEMA Corps volunteers help at CDP



Bill Wilson/The Anniston Star

FEMA Corps volunteer Jeanne Kelley of South Dakota said her time in the program has her considering a career in emergency management. FEMA Corps volunteers were helping out at the Center for Domestic Preparedness this week.

BY EDDIE BURKHALTER
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Marcos Martinez decided a year ago to do something different with his life.

That decision led the 25-year-old south-Texas college student to Anniston and strengthened his resolve to spend his life serving others.

Martinez was one of nine young men and women who spent 50 days this year volunteering at the Center for Domestic Preparedness in Anniston as members of FEMA Corps. The program is a partnership between the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Corporation for National and Community

Service.

FEMA Corps puts 1,600 18- to 24-year-olds at federal agencies across the country for 10 months each year. Team members work in disaster preparedness as well as response and recovery.

The volunteer program is expected to save taxpayers about \$60 million annually, according to the program's website. Team members receive a \$4,000 living allowance during the program, free meals and housing, and at the end of their deployment receive the equivalent of a one-year Pell Grant, which can be used to pay for college or

Please see CDP | Page 8A



Trent Penny/The Anniston Star

Calhoun County Probate Judge Alice Martin shows off one of the new voting machines that will be used statewide for next week's primary elections.

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OBITUARIES, 4A

Bruce Arrington, Woodland
Anna Lynn Clark, Roanoke
Lynn Backus Daugherty, Glencoe
Camellia 'Smiley' Faye Edmondson, Heflin

Annie Rob Hubbard Ford, Lanett
Dorthulla Miller, Munford
Juanita Nixon, Weaver
Carolyn Webb, Roanoke
Joshua Tyler Williams, Piedmont

INDEX

Classifieds 7B
Comics 6B
Crossword 9B
Editorial 6A
Lottery 2A

WEATHER, 10B



THUNDERSTORMS
HIGH: 85 LOW: 66
Cody Allen,
C.E. Hanna Elementary