



HATTIESBURG AMERICAN

SPORTS

On their way
Former Golden Eagles grinding it out in minor leagues. **1B**

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Atty: HB 1523 not justified

'There is no problem that exists for this bill'

JIMMIE E. GATES
GANNETT MISSISSIPPI

JACKSON — House Bill 1523 is a solution in search of a problem that doesn't exist.

That was the message made Friday in court arguments that concluded two days of hearings in two cases challenging the constitutionality of the state's controversial religious freedom law set to go into effect July 1.

"There is no problem that exists for this bill," argued attorney Rob McDuff,

who along with the Mississippi Center for Justice represents plaintiffs in one of the lawsuits.

However, Paul Barnes, an attorney for the state, said the focus should be on the text of HB 1523, not the hype of the legislation. He said Friday that although the law would protect three religious beliefs; it doesn't say other beliefs aren't worthy of protecting.

At stake is whether U.S. District Judge Carlton Reeves agrees with the challenges and issues a preliminary injunction to stop the law from going into effect.

Reeves concluded the hearing Friday by saying he understands the nature of the challenge that would prevent the law



U.S. District Judge Carlton Reeves concluded the hearing Friday by saying he understands the nature of the challenge that would prevent the law from going into effect.

from going into effect. Reeves took the case under advisement. He didn't say when he will issue a ruling, but it is expected sometime next week.

The plaintiffs, which include Mississippi ministers, community leaders, civic activists and a Hattiesburg church, are asking the federal court to issue an injunction blocking the bill from taking effect July 1.

The lawsuit asserts that by enacting HB 1523, the Legislature and Gov. Phil Bryant endorsed certain narrow religious beliefs that:

- » Condemn same-sex couples who get married
- » Condemn unmarried people who have sexual relations
- » Condemn transgender people

Plaintiffs contend the bill provides special legal protection exclusively to people holding those beliefs but not for those who have different beliefs.

"By targeting same-sex couples who are married or may marry in the future, unmarried people who engage in sexual

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ON THE HORIZON



PHOTOS BY SUSAN BROADBRIDGE/HATTIESBURG AMERICAN

Sebe Dale III recently opened the Italian restaurant Twisted Skillet, located on U.S. 98 West.

New businesses add to U.S. 98 corridor

LICI BEVERIDGE ENGAGEMENT EDITOR

West Hattiesburg continues to see commercial growth — especially along the U.S. 98 corridor, with plenty of new businesses on the horizon. From retail to restaurants, there is a wealth of diversity in the new offerings as well.

Twisted Skillet

Amanda and Sebe Dale III recently opened the Twisted Skillet at 6414 U.S. 98 West in the former Coopertown Cafe location.

The restaurant features home-style Italian dishes, Amanda Dale said, as well as a custom-built salad bar and a build-your-own-pasta bowl, where customers can choose their own pastas, sauces, meats and vegetables, "to let the customer express their own creative ability."

The restaurant serves lunch and dinner Wednesday-Saturday, opening at 11 a.m. and closing at 10 p.m. Twisted Skillet is closed Sunday-Tuesday.

Twisted Skillet also will have a selection of homemade Italian dishes including chicken marsala, lasagna and homemade soups.

The "twist" will be in the weekly specials the restaurant will offer, Amanda Dale said in a previous story, which will feature familiar takes on Southern seafood.

The Dales both have culinary experience. Sebe Dale owned Jack's Sandwich Shop in Columbia in the 1980s, and Amanda Dale worked as



Twisted Skillet is among the new businesses along the U.S. 98 corridor.

a sous chef at Canebrake Country Club for a couple years.

She also attended culinary school at Jones County Junior College when she turned 40.

Sebe Dale had been working offshore, but as gas prices fell and offshore jobs became scarcer, the couple decided it was time to take their careers in a new direction.

Cavender's

Cavender's Western Outfitter is under con-

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HPD to get new body and dash cameras

HASKEL BURNS
AMERICAN STAFF WRITER

Hattiesburg City Council has approved the purchase of \$249,410 worth of body and dash cameras for Hattiesburg Police Department.

Earlier this week, council members voted 4-0 to purchase 79 VISTA HD Wi-Fi Extended Capacity Systems (body cams) and 26 4RE In-Car Video Systems (dash cams) from WatchGuard, which are the sole manufacturers of the products.

"I'm so glad that they're getting this — this is great for the police department and for the citizens," Ward 4 Councilwoman Mary Dryden said. "It's one of those accountability measures that I think helps all the way around."

The body cameras feature nine hours of continuous high-definition recording, 32 GB of storage, Wi-Fi docking bases, cables and a one-year warranty. The VIS-

TAs also offer "Record-After-The-Fact," which gives the user the ability to retrieve video that was not previously recorded as an event.

The dash cameras come equipped with GPS, high-definition forward-facing camera, infrared color cabin camera, DVR and a 16-GB removable thumb drive. The 4RE systems are a newer version of the cameras HPD currently uses, and are compatible with the new body cameras.

"It's going to speed up the process by having this one system," HPD spokesman Lt. Jon Traxler said. "When we walk into a crime scene, we just hit the button that's recording, and it's collecting evidence. It uploads to the system, and we send our case over to the district attorney, and bang — there's all the evidence right there already in it."

"And so it's going to help us with that process. On top of our regular evidence collection, there may be something that with the naked eye or with pictures, you may not get. But when you've got a camera walking through, it's sitting there videoing everything."

Also included in the purchase are cameras for the department's interview room.

"They look like the dash cams, and they're attached to the same system," Traxler said. "So our detectives, whenever they're doing interviews in their office, it automatically uploads to the system as well. So that helps them to be able to create their cases as one case, instead

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Mostly sunny and hot.
High 96, low 75.

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