

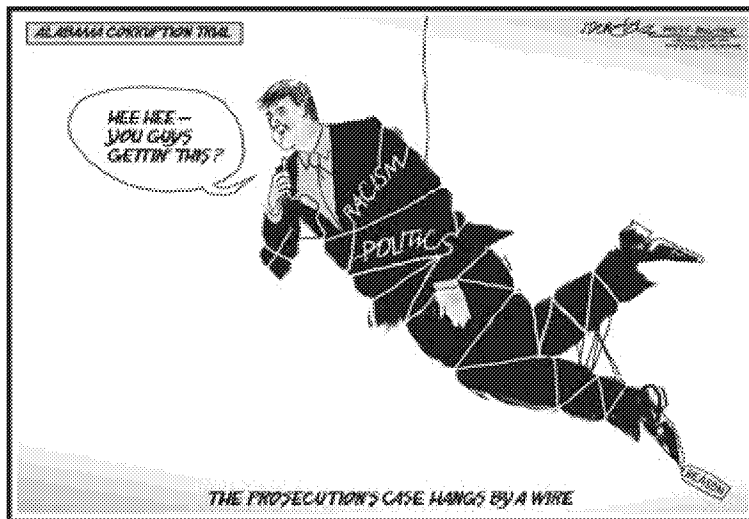


Alabama Republicans target Democrats in Machiavellian state legislature plot (Political Skinny)

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By **George Talbot**



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JD Crowe 6/17/11

Among the various Machiavellian tactics employed by a Republican state senator from the Birmingham area was a never-implemented plan for the Republican Party to push for state **Rep. Yvonne Kennedy**, D-Mobile, to become speaker of the state House of Representatives.

The idea became public last week from the testimony of **Scott Beason**, R-Gardendale, during a State House corruption trial in Montgomery.

Beason made a reference to his idea last year during conversations with GOP

colleagues. The conversation was one of about 120 that he secretly recorded as part of an FBI investigation into an alleged bribery scheme over pro-gambling legislation.

Beason pushed the idea at time before the GOP seized control of both chambers of the Legislature in November's election. Attorneys for VictoryLand owner **Milton McGregor**, who is on **trial** along with eight others, asked Beason about the ploy in an effort to discredit him with potentially insensitive comments about blacks.

The idea was that Kennedy in the speaker's chair would harm the Democrats and help the Republicans.

"At one time, I did," Beason testified of the proposal. "And it has nothing to do with her being black."

The transcript of the conversation suggests race did play a role in Beason's thinking, however.

"If the blacks take over the Democratic caucus and she's speaker, she's completely disorganized. She cannot raise money from the business community," he said. "They won't be able to save half their candidates."

The idea didn't go over well with some of the Republicans in the room, according to the transcript. "What, are you crazy?" asked an unidentified lawmaker.

Beason expressed frustration with his colleagues' lack of imagination. "OK, great, you'll be a (political) minority for the rest of eternity."



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State Rep. Yvonne
Kennedy

Kennedy could not be reached for comment.

Ben Brooks condemns Beason comments

Tape-recorded remarks by Scott Beason where he referred to black casino customers as "aborigines" provided one of the biggest bombshells during the first week of the bingo trial.

Beason, wearing a wire, made the comments during a caucus meeting with other Republican senators including **Ben Brooks** of Mobile. Brooks said that while talk of political strategy is common in the Legislature, the discussions captured in the recording crossed the line.

"It's unacceptable to use terms that are racist in tone, that are derisive in nature, of any group," Brooks said. "I condemn this choice of words by the people you heard. Those types of words are not acceptable whatsoever."

Brooks said he was frustrated and disappointed that his name came up during the bingo corruption trial at all, adding that he had no recollection of the conversation with Beason.

"I don't think anybody wants to be mentioned in a trial like this," he said. "Candidly, I don't recall the specifics of that day that was recorded. I have so many conversations in the course of a session, I just don't recall the specifics of that conversation."

Brooks added that he wasn't very involved in strategic political discussions surrounding the issue and couldn't speak to how race factored in. His opposition to the legislation was ideological, Brooks said.

"Even if you're a person who was pro-gambling back in those days...these were bad bills," he said.

Levon Manzie visits the White House

Mobile County school board member **Levon Manzie** said he was in awe Friday afternoon when he got to shake hands with President Obama in the White House.

Manzie, who was in Washington, D.C., with other members of the People for the American Way Foundation's Young Elected Officials Network from Wednesday through Saturday, attended what he called an intimate reception with Obama and about 100 others. Obama gave a speech about the tough economic times and the challenges of education and then shook hands with members of the audience.

Manzie said he only had a couple of second's worth of contact with the president, but "meeting him in person has further given me validation of why I want to be in public service. He is truly an inspirational man."

Manzie said meeting the president has been the highlight of his year.

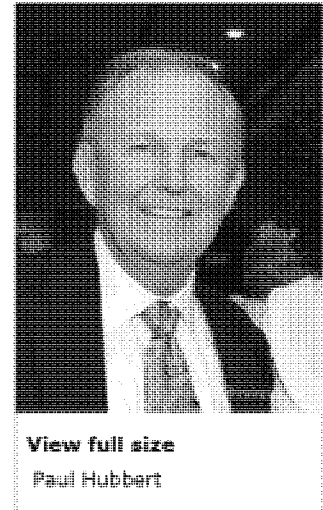
"I've followed him since he was a politician in Illinois," Manzie said. "It was quite an honor to be in the same room with him, let alone to shake his hand."

Paul Hubbert: Legislature a disaster

Alabama Education Association boss **Paul Hubbert**, in Mobile last week, said the most recent session of the Alabama Legislature was "probably the worst for education that we could get."

"What could have been a good session turned out to be a disastrous one," he added.

Hubbert and about 400 educators from across the state were at the Renaissance Mobile Riverview Plaza Hotel last week for the AEA's annual leadership conference.



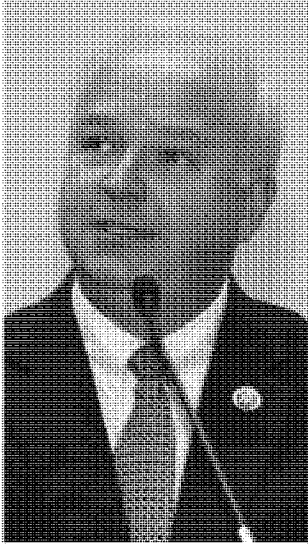
"When school starts, everybody will go into their classrooms and do the best job that they can," Hubbert said. "Are they disappointed that the Legislature did what they did — increase class sizes and cut pay? Yes, they are. Morale was affected by that. But when they walk into their classrooms, their concern is going to be whether Susie or Johnny is reading and learning what they need to learn. They'll focus on trying to make that light bulb come on."

Alabama trustees renew old ties to Mobile

The University of **Alabama Board of Trustees** met at the Battle House Renaissance Mobile Hotel & Spa in downtown Mobile Thursday and Friday. It was the first time the board traveled to the Port City to convene, according to the board's president pro tempore, Finis St. John.

But the university has long had a presence in Mobile, establishing its first medical school here in the 1800s. The medical school moved to Tuscaloosa and then to Birmingham, where it remains.

"One of the best things about driving here was that about half-way down, you stopped seeing blown-down buildings and trees," St. John said of a series of devastating tornadoes that hit the state in April. "That series of storms had a serious effect on our three campuses."



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U.S. Rep. Jo Bonner, R-Mobile

U.S. **Rep. Jo Bonner**, R-Mobile, whose sister Judy Bonner is executive vice president and provost at the University of Alabama, welcomed the board.

"One thing we have in common, whether you're here, in the Shoals or the Wiregrass, is we love the University of Alabama," he said. Local residents who serve on the board are Marietta Urquhart and Angus R. Cooper Jr., who gave a history of the relationship between Mobile and UA.

Little change for Jo Bonner's district

The 1st Congressional District will change little in a redistricting plan approved by the Alabama Legislature earlier this month.

The district, currently represented by Mobile Republican Rep. Jo Bonner, will lose part of Clarke County to the 7th Congressional District, but its shape will remain identical otherwise.

"I am grateful that the Legislature was able to keep the adjustments to a minimum," Bonner said in a telephone interview.

He noted that Clarke County is divided between the 1st and 7th districts already and will remain divided in the new plan.

Bonner said he and the 7th district representative, Democrat Terri Sewell of Birmingham, have a "really solid relationship" and will work together to represent Clarke County.

Rusty Glover tough on DUI

Drunk drivers whose blood-alcohol level nears twice the legal limit could be in line for twice the penalty, under a bill signed Friday by Gov. Robert Bentley.

The bill's sponsor, Republican **Sen. Rusty Glover** of Semmes, said the tougher punishments will make Alabama eligible for \$2 million in federal money annually and should make people think twice before driving after a night of hard drinking.

21-cv-01530

2/10/2024 Trial

Milligan Plaintiffs' Exhibit No. 61

6/20/2011

"By increasing penalties and getting the word out that the penalties have been increased, it may deter people from drinking excessively before getting behind the wheel," Glover said.

Alabama law prohibits driving with a blood-alcohol level of .08. Glover's bill mandates that drivers found behind the wheel at .15 must lose their licenses for at least a year and receive double the minimum punishment prescribed by Alabama DUI laws.

That punishment varies depending on factors such as how many DUI offenses a person has been charged with.

Glover's bill also mandates double the minimum punishment for people older than 21 who drive drunk with a child under the age of 14 in the car.

Today's column includes contributions from George Altman, Rena Havner Philips, Brendan Kirby and George Talbot.

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