



Office of Senate President Pro Tempore Del Marsh  
Press Clips  
Friday, April 30, 2010

- [Beason to run for Alabama congressional seat \(AP\)](#)
- [Sen. Shadrack McGill leaving legislature but not leaving politics; qualifies to run for new position \(al.com\)](#)
- [Former mayor of Morris running for District 17 state senate seat \(al.com\)](#)
- [Bill tackles calendar flexibility \(TimesDaily\)](#)
- [This week in the Legislature: Regulating public meetings, tanning beds \(Montgomery Advertiser\)](#)
- [OUR VIEW: Tax credits to expand dual enrollment a positive move \(Gadsden Times\)](#)
- [Bill would put prayer back in schools \(Daily Home\)](#)
- [Medical marijuana gains traction in the Deep South \(AP\)](#)
- [Supporters of Carly's Law to legalize marijuana-derived medicine for seizures holding rally March 1 \(al.com\)](#)
- [Animal census bill passes House, moves on to Senate \(TimesDaily\)](#)
- [Official: Alabama hunters fail to report deer kills \(AP\)](#)
- [Qualifying day creates buzz: Former U.S. Rep. Parker Griffith announces he will run for governor \(Montgomery Advertiser\)](#)
- [The lay of the land heading into 2014 Alabama House and Senate races \(Yellowhammer News\)](#)
- [Once big backers of Democrats, trial lawyers now spending big on Republicans \(Montgomery Advertiser\)](#)
- [Four years after historic takeover of Legislature, Mobile GOP still playing offense \(al.com\)](#)

- ['Tis \(still\) the season: February deer season in Alabama likely to be expanded next year \(Montgomery Advertiser\)](#)
- [Eric Holder set to extend recognition of same-sex marriage rights to all states \(AP\)](#)

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## [Beason to run for Alabama congressional seat \(AP\)](#)

MONTGOMERY (AP) — State Sen. Scott Beason is making another run for Alabama's 6th District congressional seat, adding a high-profile tea party name to a large GOP field.

Beason announced his campaign Friday, the final day to file qualifying papers.

So far seven Republicans are contending for the seat being vacated by U.S. Rep. Spencer Bachus.

Beason was behind Alabama's sweeping immigration bill, considered the toughest in the nation before it was largely gutted by the courts.

He was also the sponsor of Alabama gun legislation last year. The bill pitted the National Rifle Association against business groups over the issue of guns in workplace parking lots.

Beason lost a primary bid to Bachus in 2012. Beason announced last month that he is leaving the Alabama Legislature when his term ends.

## [Sen. Shadrack McGill leaving legislature but not leaving politics; qualifies to run for new position \(al.com\)](#)

SCOTTSBORO, Alabama - State Sen. Shadrack McGill is leaving the state legislature but he's not leaving politics.

McGill, R-Woodville, has qualified to run for revenue commissioner in Jackson County, according to the county's GOP chairwoman Ellen O'Connor.

McGill, a political newcomer who stunned longtime state Sen. Lowell Barron in 2010, has seen his only term in Montgomery marked with controversy and he said last year he would not seek a second term.

McGill will face two challengers in the June 4 Republican primary: Kathy Thompson and Kermit Cornelison, according to O'Connor.

O'Connor also said that James "Tommy" Hanes Jr. had qualified to run for House District 23. Rep. John Robinson, D-Scottsboro, currently holds that seat.

## **Former mayor of Morris running for District 17 state senate seat (al.com)**

GARDENDALE, Alabama - Gardendale attorney and former mayor of Morris Jim Roberts qualified today with the Alabama Republican Party to run for Senate District 17. Roberts joins a large field of candidates in the Republican primary to replace Sen. Scott Beason (R-Gardendale), who is not seeking reelection.

"As a mayor of a small town, I made fiscal responsibility and economic growth my top two priorities. I'll take those same conservative principles to the Alabama Senate," Roberts said in a press release. "Our state government needs people who understand the Constitution, follow its strict guidelines, and listen to the people instead of the powerbrokers."

Roberts is a practicing attorney in Gardendale and his law practice is a small business, which he says gives him first-hand knowledge on how to balance a budget and control spending.

"I helped dozens of candidates in Jefferson and Blount counties over the years, including Scott Beason," Roberts said. "Now I look forward to helping the folks in Jefferson, Blount, St. Clair and Talladega counties by representing them in Montgomery with integrity and consistency."

The Republican primary will be held on June 3, 2014.

Roberts is also a former Army engineer and a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, and he serves on Congressman Spencer Bachus' Service Academy Interview Committee.

## **Bill tackles calendar flexibility (TimesDaily)**

For the first time in three years, Alabama's public schools are free to set their calendars without the state telling them when to start and end.

While school district officials are ecstatic to have their local control back, there is not as much flexibility with scheduling the 2014-15 school year as there could be if a proposed calendar option bill becomes law.

The bill, sponsored in the Alabama Legislature by Senate Pro Tem Del Marsh, R-Anniston, would allow a 180-day calendar or equivalent hours, which amounts to 1,080 hours.

The bill would give school districts flexibility to schedule creatively, adopting calendars that could allow special breaks desirable in individual communities, an earlier start than in recent years or an earlier ending date.

Locally, school districts are in the process of planning calendars. The Florence district has already approved a 173-day calendar that satisfies the 1,080-hour requirement.

Pre-existing law states the school year must be 180 days, but the flexibility of adding an hours option wouldn't take away instructional time. It likewise wouldn't lock a school system into having to schedule 180 days.

Marsh said he has seen incredible success in school systems that have operated under such flexibility and he says that requiring 180 days of school ties the hands of districts on how their calendar has to be laid out.

The bill stipulates no school board would be required to use the option.

"It just makes sure the hours are there," Marsh said. "I've always believed local control is important. They could go with longer days at certain times of the year. They may have six hours one day and eight another. It is up to them how they run the school year."

Marsh said the law would give schools the tools they need to raise test scores and, "If they think having the flexibility in their hours will help, then I want to help."

Malissa Valdez-Hubert, public information manager for the Alabama State Department of Education, said currently school districts are between laws, so state officials are asking schools to maintain the 1,080 hours in their calendars.

“(State Department officials) made the call because we were caught in that purgatory between laws,” Valdez-Hubert said. “Systems are coming up with creative ways to schedule their time. There are dozens and dozens of systems that have less than 180 days in their calendar, but have the hourly equivalent. In some cases, they just cut out some breaks and made other adjustments.”

The Lauderdale County school system is expected to adopt its calendar next month. The proposed calendar has 180 days, but a week earlier start date than last year.

“The calendar has an Aug. 14 start date for students with a three-day break at the end of October,” said Lauderdale Assistant Superintendent Mark Butler. “Not having that mandatory start date helped us more than anything in putting our calendar together.”

## **[This week in the Legislature: Regulating public meetings, tanning beds \(Montgomery Advertiser\)](#)**

This week, the state Legislature is set to take on -- among other things -- tanning beds, religious freedom in schools and some possible changes to the state’s Open Meetings Act. All of these events subject to change.

### House of Representatives

The House of Representatives is scheduled to return at 1 p.m. Tuesday. A special-order calendar has been approved for Tuesday, which includes bills that would regulate tanning bed use and prohibit municipalities from imposing a business license tax on rental property.

### In committees:

- The House Judiciary Committee meets at 1 p.m. Wednesday, and is scheduled to take up a bill that would allow posting the Ten Commandments in public buildings.
- The Education Policy Committee meets at 1 p.m. Wednesday, and is scheduled to hold a public hearing on a bill that would require school districts to allow religious expression in schools.

### Senate

The Senate is expected to return at 2 p.m. Tuesday. Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh, R-Anniston, said the Senate likely would focus on sunset legislation this week.

In committees:

- The Senate Judiciary Committee meets at 1 p.m. Wednesday, and is scheduled to take up a bill that would make revisions to the state's Open Meetings Act.
- The Senate Constitution and Elections committee meets at 8:30 a.m. Thursday, and is expected to take up a bill that would make it harder to send local constitutional amendments to statewide votes.

## **OUR VIEW: Tax credits to expand dual enrollment a positive move (Gadsden Times)**

Published: Sunday, February 9, 2014 at 6:01 a.m.

The use of tax credits as enticements or incentives is controversial. Opponents say it bleeds money away from necessities like schools or road repairs. Proponents say the economic boost from landing an industrial plant or retail development will mean more revenue for everyone in the long run.

We've said such enticements are necessary these days, while noting that all factors still need to be weighed to see if the potential benefits justify the investment.

A tax credit plan being pushed by Republicans in the state House of Representatives doesn't involve a plant or a shopping center, but we think it meets our test.

It would create \$10 million in scholarships to help more Alabama high school students double up and simultaneously attend job training classes at two-year colleges.

The state already offers a dual enrollment program, but the scholarships would allow more than 9,500 additional students to take part.

Funding would come from donations by businesses that in turn would receive a 50 percent tax credit. Those businesses also could earmark up to 80 percent of their contributions to help students entering a specific field.

House GOP leaders say the plan would produce more skilled workers in Alabama, which would help keep the state attractive to industrial recruiters.

Superintendent of Education Tommy Bice said it would increase opportunities for students who might not otherwise be able to afford tuition for dual enrollment classes.

The cost, according to the Legislative Fiscal Office, would be a \$5 million annual reduction in the tax collections that fund Alabama's K-12 schools. Not surprisingly, the Alabama Education Association is balking, even though it supports the concept of dual enrollment.

We question whether the AEA has the political clout in 2014 to stop this bill if Republicans are serious about passing it (and they seem to be).

Given the positive signs in the Education Trust Fund — more money available, stabilization from peaks and valleys thanks to rolling reserve budgeting — we really see no reason it should be stopped.

We've said this so often we ought to save the block of type, but the technological skills students will learn in these classes are what employers want now and will desire even more in the future.

What the GOP has proposed is education. It needs to happen.

## **Bill would put prayer back in schools (Daily Home)**

by Will Heath

ST. CLAIR COUNTY — Rep. Mack Butler says he believes many who work in public education are fearful of any talk related to religion.

"It's not that there's animosity," Butler said. "People are scared to death to touch it."

Butler, R-Rainbow City, is proposing legislation for the second straight — the legislation made it out of the House in 2013, but did not pass the Senate — which he says "reinforces a student's right to express their religious beliefs."

The bill, he says, will allow students to write about the Bible from a historical or literary point of view, as well as express admiration for characters within the text for academic purposes.

"It allows for, if it's just a normal curriculum, you can express your religious views," he said.

Butler also said the bill will "put prayer 100 percent legal, back in school, in the state of Alabama."

"We've gotten a lot of support for this," he said. "I do anticipate a public hearing on it, and I expect to pass it."

Rep. Jim McClendon, R-Springville, was also working on education related legislation this week. McClendon is once again preparing legislation that will replace textbooks with tablets in public schools. He said he expects the bill to come before the Education Ways and Means Committee this week.

"It would replace a lot of things," McClendon said. "Replaces textbooks, and a lot of school systems wouldn't have backpacks anymore because they don't need them. They'd replace copy machines, because they wouldn't need them or copy paper or ink or that kind of thing."

"It's a huge transition. A lot of people have to be brought in. There's a pretty big expense involved in getting the infrastructure in place; it's a \$100 million bond issue if it stays intact."

Rep. Randy Wood, R-Anniston, brought up legislation he actually passed through the House of Representatives last week, after the session was restored. Wood said the legislation will toughen the state's law for burglary.

"Right now in the state of Alabama, if someone breaks in your home and you're not there, it's a Class C felony," Wood said. "If you're at home, or your spouse or child is there, then it's a Class B felony."

"Whether you're at home or not, we're making all of it a Class B felony. It sends more of a message to the outlaw, because he knows exactly what his crime is. He's going to wait and watch. A Class B felony is a good bit of jail time, and he doesn't want that. This maybe will make him think twice."

State Senate president pro tem Del Marsh, R-Anniston, said the Senate is discussing legislation that will change state retirees from a cost-of-living adjustment to a bonus system.

".The discussion was to move more toward a bonus system than a COLA system," Marsh said. "A COLA is a long-term obligation, where a bonus is a one-time deal. The private sector doesn't pay cost-of-living increases to retirees. When you retire, you've got a pension and it is what it is."

"For some reason, the state instituted a system where retirees receive cost-of-living increases. It's created a huge unfunded liability on the retirement system, and we're trying to get that under control."

Sen. Scott Beason, R-Gardendale, and Rep. Dickie Drake, R-Leeds, were unavailable for comment at press time.



## **Medical marijuana gains traction in the Deep South (AP)**

ATLANTA (AP) — Medical marijuana has been a non-starter in recent years in the Deep South, where many Republican lawmakers feared it could lead to widespread drug use and social ills. That now appears to be changing, with proposals to allow a form of medical marijuana gaining momentum in a handful of Southern states.

Twenty states and the District of Columbia have legalized medical marijuana, and this year powerful GOP lawmakers in Georgia and Alabama are putting their weight behind bills that would allow for the limited use of cannabis oil by those with specific medical conditions. Other Southern states are also weighing the issue with varying levels of support.

The key to swaying the hearts of conservative lawmakers has been the stories of children suffering up to 100 seizures a day whose parents say they could benefit from access to cannabidiol, which would be administered orally in a liquid form. And proponents argue the cannabis oil is low in tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC, the psychoactive compound in marijuana that makes users feel high.

"I'm an unlikely champion for this cause," said Georgia Rep. Allen Peake, a businessman from Macon who attended the evangelical Dallas Theological Seminary. "Once people realize it's not a 6-year-old smoking a joint, most folks realize this is the compassionate thing to do."

### Medical Marijuana

In a Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2014 file photo, medical marijuana advocate Barbara Kutchback, of Monroe, Ga., holds a photo of her 3-year-old granddaughter as she listens to other advocates tell of their children's suffering, after a bill to legalize marijuana for medicinal purposes was introduced in the State House chamber, in Atlanta. Kutchback's granddaughter suffers from a rare epilepsy disease and they believe marijuana can help relieve her suffering. (AP Photo/John Amis, File)

Peake's bill has already earned the backing of more than 80 state lawmakers, including several members of the House Republican leadership, who signed on as co-sponsors and the state's largest professional association of doctors. The bill would revive a long-dormant research program allowing academic institutions to distribute the medical cannabis and would be "limited in scope, tightly restricted, well regulated and managed by doctors," Peake said.

Alabama Rep. Mike Ball, a retired hostage negotiator for the State Patrol, is behind a bill that would allow people to possess the cannabis oil if they have certain medical conditions. It passed a key committee vote on Wednesday.

"The public is starting to understand what this is," said Ball, who chairs a powerful House committee and is a prominent voice on law enforcement issues. "The political fear is shifting from what will happen if we pass it, to might what happen if we don't," Ball said.

The bills in Georgia and Alabama still have more vetting, and their ultimate prospects are not certain. But what is happening offers a strong signal of what's to come in other states.

In Louisiana, although a bill has yet to be introduced, a recent committee hearing at the Capitol on legalizing medical marijuana drew a standing-room-only crowd, and Gov. Bobby Jindal made comments last month indicating he was willing to consider it.

"When it comes to medical marijuana ... if there is a legitimate medical need, I'd certainly be open to making it available under very strict supervision for patients that would benefit from that," Jindal said, according to a report in *The Advocate*.

Technically, both Georgia and Louisiana have laws on the books from the 1980s and 1990s that allow for the use of medical marijuana, but those programs essentially ended before they could start. Georgia's law established the academic research program for those diagnosed with glaucoma and cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy and radiation, but the program stalled when the federal government stopped delivery of legal cannabis.

Louisiana's law allowed for glaucoma and cancer patients and those suffering from spastic quadriplegia to receive marijuana for therapeutic use but regulations to govern the program were never developed.

In Mississippi, Republican state Sen. Josh Harkins of Brandon is sponsoring a cannabis oil bill similar to the ones in Alabama and Georgia. Harkins said one of his constituents has a 20-month-old daughter with Dravet syndrome, a form of pediatric epilepsy, and the oil can help reduce the number of seizures.

Elsewhere, both Kentucky and Tennessee have medical marijuana bills under consideration although they have yet to gain traction. Kentucky Senate President Rover Stivers, R-Manchester, has said he's not convinced marijuana has legitimate medical purposes and called it an area ripe for abuse.

In Florida, it's likely to become a campaign issue in the fall given that Gov. Rick Scott is up for re-election and a proposed constitutional amendment will be on the ballot that would allow for the

medical use of marijuana as determined by a licensed physician. Former Republican Gov. Charlie Christ, now a Democrat seeking to challenge Scott, has called it "an issue of compassion, trusting doctors and trusting the people of Florida."

Meanwhile, Alabama Gov. Robert Bentley has signaled a willingness to discuss medicine that might be derived from marijuana with appropriate federal regulation.

"If someone wants to use the medicine that is in marijuana, go through the same testing that you have to go through when you do that through the (U.S. Food and Drug Administration), you go through all of that, do the testing, the drug testing, that's fine," Bentley said last month. "I have no problem with that. I am not just for prescribing marijuana."

Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal has declined to take a position, but noted the "strong case being presented by some of the families with very serious situations involving their children."

Dustin Chandler, a police officer in Pelham, Ala., has been a major part of the effort there. His daughter, 2-year-old Carly, has three to five seizures each day from a severe neurological condition she has had since infancy. Chandler believes cannabidiol could help control his daughter's seizures and improve her cognitive functioning based on anecdotal evidence seen elsewhere.

"We've been battling the stigma from the m-word," Chandler said. "I'd love to hear my daughter talk. I'd love to hear her say one word. You know that is something most parents take for granted."

Overall, public opinion in support of legalization has shifted in less than a decade, according to William Galston and E.J. Dionne, who co-wrote a paper last year on the topic for The Brookings Institution. The authors noted proponents were shrewd in focusing the earliest campaigns on efforts to allow the use of marijuana for medical purposes, citing a 2013 Pew Research Center survey that three-quarters of Americans, including 72 percent of Republicans, believe marijuana has legitimate medical uses.

Among critics' biggest concerns is that allowing medical marijuana even under a narrow list of circumstance would eventually open the door to widespread use. Peake, the Georgia lawmaker, has been adamant that will not be the case.

"I am concerned as anyone that we would get to a slippery slope of a broader scope of marijuana use in the state," Peake said. "I promise you I will fight that with every bit of energy in me."

Georgia Rep. Terry England, chairman of the powerful House Appropriations Committee and a deacon at his Baptist church in Auburn, is a prime example of a state lawmaker who never thought of legalizing medical marijuana but is now open to it, even signing on as a co-sponsor to Peake's bill.

"I've not made a complete 180-degree turn, but I'm probably at 178 degrees," England said.

## **Supporters of Carly's Law to legalize marijuana-derived medicine for seizures holding rally March 1 (al.com)**

Supporters of Carly's Law, the proposed Alabama law that would legalize a marijuana-derived medicine that could help control seizures and other health issues, are holding a rally in Pelham on March 1.

The rally to promote the legalization of the marijuana-derived cannabidiol, also known as CBD oil, will be from 2 to 6 p.m. at the Pelham Civic Complex and Ice Arena.

Speakers scheduled so far include state Rep. Mike Ball of Madison who sponsored the bill and Paige Figi, whose young daughter Charlotte Figi had suffered 300 seizures a week but dropped to a couple or so a month after using the marijuana-derived treatment.

"It's going to be a public awareness and educational rally to let everyone know what Carly's Law is about and who it can help," said the Birmingham area's Dustin Chandler, whose daughter is the bill's inspiration.

The 2-year-old girl suffers from uncontrollable seizures caused by a genetic disorder called CDKL5, also known as cyclin-dependent kinase-like 5. Carly's parents, Dustin and Amy Chandler, hope that CBD oil could help treat their daughter's violent seizures that happen multiple times each day.

"We're going to have hopefully hundreds of families there it might affect who can tell their story," Dustin Chandler said. "They're the face behind Carly's Law. There are real children and real people affected by the passage of this law."

The Alabama Senate Judiciary Committee on Wednesday gave approval to the bill by an 8-3 vote. The legislation's next step is consideration on the Senate floor.

"I think it shows good bipartisan support," Chandler said about the Senate committee's action. "I don't feel this is a red or blue issue. This is a human-right issue, a health issue."

Many Alabama families are calling on lawmakers to approve the bill so their children could potentially benefit from the marijuana-derived treatment that does not produce the drug's intoxicating effects. At least one family from Alabama has relocated to Colorado, which has legalized marijuana use for medicinal and recreational purposes, to help their daughter who suffers from violent seizures.

"We want to let people know what Carly's Law is about and who it's affecting," Chandler said. "We want to show the importance to the public and the politicians that there are faces behind this law that it will help and we are real people and we need help."

Chandler, who is a Pelham police officer, said he hopes people will understand the importance of the law in Alabama.

"The parents that want to help their children are not criminals. It's an issue of doing the right thing for the children of Alabama. That's essentially what it is," he said. "To me, a vote no to the Carly's Law is a vote no to the people of Alabama."

## **[Animal census bill passes House, moves on to Senate \(TimesDaily\)](#)**

A House bill would require animal shelters in Alabama to keep and make public each month information about the number of animals they take in, adopt out and destroy.

House Bill 93, the "Animal Census Reporting Act," requires an accounting of how many animals come into shelters and whether they are owner surrenders or strays picked up off the street. Shelters would also have to report how many animals were adopted, transferred to other shelters, transferred to a research laboratory or school or any agency that brokers research animals, or euthanized.

The reports would be considered public information and made available upon request.

"We're just trying to get a handle on how extensive the problem is, animals that are just turned loose, (that come from) puppy mills ...," bill sponsor Rep. Steve McMillan, R-Bay Minette, said. "We feel like it is a big problem, but we don't know how big."

McMillan introduced the bill in the 2013 session and a sub-committee of lawmakers made some changes to it and "ironed out everyone's concerns," he said.

"To my knowledge, there's no opposition to it," McMillan said.

It has been approved by the House and will be in a Senate committee this week.

In October, Decatur Mayor Don Kyle sent Decatur Animal Services Director Carol Wicks an email requiring her to reduce the population of the 27,000-square-foot shelter to 45 in 30 days. At the time, the shelter had 310 animals. Wicks took the order as a directive to euthanize more than 100 healthy animals that she said she believed were good candidates for adoption. Adoptions went up following a story in The Decatur Daily about the demand and the possibility of large-scale euthanasia to meet it.

From days to hours in schools

A bill from Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh, R-Anniston, would allow local school systems to decide how many school days they have each year starting next year, provided they get in 1,080 hours.

"It gives the flexibility to schools and let them have their own start, stop dates," Marsh said last week. "It just makes sure the hours are there. I've always believed local control is important."

Some Republicans in 2012 were criticized for pushing through the Statehouse a bill that mandated schools begin the academic year no earlier than two weeks before Labor Day and end no later than the Friday before Memorial Day. The goal was to increase the summer vacation season. Opponents, including some lawmakers from north Alabama, called it the "Baldwin County Economic Development Bill" and said it took control away from local systems.

It allowed for 180 instructional days, or 1,080 hours. The bill sunsets this year, but Marsh's new bill allows systems to keep that 1,080-hour flexibility.

Tommy Bice, the state superintendent of schools, said he is supportive of Senate Bill 290.

"It aligns with the position of the state board to provide local school systems with the flexibility needed to meet the diverse needs of their students," Bice said last week.

Social media contract questioned

State agencies might want to think twice before trying to use taxpayer dollars to improve their social media presence. Or at least pay a third party to do it for them.

Lawmakers on the contract review committee, which oversees service contracts that state departments enter into, questioned, and delayed, a \$100,000, one-year-contract between the Conservation Department and Montgomery advertising agency Copperwing Design for social media services to promote the state's Forever Wild program.

Sen. Paul Sanford, R-Huntsville, said taxpayers were being "had to the tune of \$100,000" with that contract.

"There is a component on Facebook that lets you promote your own page, and I think you're paying someone to use that," Sanford said.

Representatives from the Conservation Department said Thursday they've had similar contracts in the past and seen an increase in social media activity and activity on state lands. Still, lawmakers were unconvinced about the \$100,000 expense.

"I have a 17-year-old daughter who can do Facebook for you," said Sen. Bill Holtzclaw, R-Madison.

## **Official: Alabama hunters fail to report deer kills (AP)**

BIRMINGHAM — Although they did a better job this year than last, Alabama hunters didn't do enough in voluntarily reporting all the deer they killed this hunting season, a state conservation official says.

Prodded by an aggressive public information campaign by the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, hunters reported killing more than 18,500 deer during the season, which ends today as legal hunting closes in southwest Alabama.

Chuck Sykes, director of the state Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division, said hunters reported their kills far more often this season than in past years, when as few as 1,000 kills might be reported during a season.

But hunter surveys and statistical analysis show the number still is only a small fraction of the deer that were actually killed in Alabama, he said.

"We had about 260,000 estimated killed last year," Sykes said. "With what we got (this year) you're looking at only 3 or 4 percent of what was actually killed."

The state said it needs an accurate count of the number of deer that are killed, plus the size and gender of the animals, to determine the health of the state's herd, and it tried to require hunters to report their kills this season through a program called "Game Check."

Legislative opponents blocked the rule at the last minute, citing concerns over possible fines and technology, so reporting remained only voluntary for the roughly 171,000 Alabama residents who purchased all-game hunting licenses.

Sykes said the wildlife agency will consider again whether to attempt to make the reporting requirement mandatory for all hunters in the state.

"Biologically I think it's a necessity. But I've found out that biological facts and science sometimes don't win out. That's a shame," Sykes said.

The state also uses mail surveys completed by hunters to estimate the numbers and health of deer killed each season, Sykes said, but compliance with that program also is spotty.

Auburn University will analyze the results of the voluntary reporting and survey results to determine whether researchers can develop an statistically valid picture of the state's deer herd and the number of animals killed by hunters, Sykes said.

The voluntarily reported statistics showed that 18,501 deer were killed through the middle of last week. Hunters reported killing deer in each of the state's 67 counties, with the largest number being reported in Jackson County, where hunters reported killing more than 730 deer.

Hunters most often reported deer by an automated telephone system, Sykes said, with 47 percent of all the kills coming in that way. Hunters used a smartphone application to report 32 percent of kills and used a website to report 21 percent of the deer, he said.

Hunting season closed in most of Alabama at the end of January, but it continued in parts of southwest Alabama through Monday.

**[Qualifying day creates buzz: Former U.S. Rep. Parker Griffith announces he will run for governor \(Montgomery Advertiser\)](#)**



One-time U.S. Rep. Parker Griffith, a former Republican — and previously a former Democrat — said Friday he will seek the Alabama Democratic Party's nomination for governor.

Griffith's decision, made just 20 minutes before deadline, capped the qualification period for both parties, which was moved up two months this year due to overseas voting requirements.

In Montgomery, there will be two contested House races. Former Rep. David Grimes, R-Montgomery, will run against Rep. John Knight, D-Montgomery, in District 77, encompassing downtown Montgomery and an area between Interstate 85 and South Boulevard.

In District 75, comprising east Montgomery and portions of Elmore County, Montgomery County Commissioner Reed Ingram, a Republican, will face lawyer and retired state employee Therese Ford, who qualified to run as a Democrat. Incumbent Rep. Greg Wren, R-Montgomery, is not seeking re-election.

Statewide, both parties Friday evening were trying to catch up with applications for 2014 campaigns, and both sounded hopeful notes. Bill Armistead, chairman of the Alabama Republican Party, said he believes his party will continue to hold the supermajority in both legislative chambers, and that they'll probably expand it.

"It's our objective to continue to be the majority party in the state," he said.

Joe Reed, a vice-chairman of the Alabama Democratic Party and leader of the Alabama Democratic Conference, said Friday the ADC still needed time to assess the new candidates, but felt the party was coming together. He hoped that would help spread the party's main messages.

"As soon as working white people understand that their destiny is tied to working black folks, they'll be here," he said.

A late entry

Griffith arrived at Alabama Democratic Party headquarters Friday afternoon with members of his family, including his wife, Virginia. Griffith, who also served in the Alabama Senate, said he spoke with his wife before fully committing to a race for governor.

"I feel like a 4-year-old on the high diving board," Griffith said.

A cancer doctor by training, Griffith, 71, said his campaign would emphasize two Alabama Democratic themes of recent years: Medicaid expansion and the creation of a statewide lottery to fund education.

"When you look at the number of people going to the border of Alabama, spending money on education lotteries in other states, we have no business without an education lottery," he said.

As a congressman, Griffith voted against President Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act, which funds Medicaid expansion, and cited it as a reason for his switch to the Republican Party late in 2009. On Friday, Griffith called the ACA "a confused and difficult bill." However, he called Medicaid expansion one of the "good things" in the bill, saying it would improve health outcomes and create jobs in the state.

"The human side is that we're denying Alabamians health care, when in fact I know from personal experience the early diagnosis of any disease (means) less expense," he said.

Challengers to Gov. Robert Bentley face a steep climb against an incumbent with \$2.7 million war chest and a state that has been trending steadily Republican. Griffith acknowledged that he faced a "difficult" race, but said he felt confident he could raise the funds for a statewide campaign.

As for his party-switching, Griffith said he did not expect it to be a major issue, and said there were "vast" differences between the state and national parties.

"I've been on both sides of the issues," he said. "I know the Republicans, I know the Democrats, but I'm an American first and an Alabamian first, and the parties need to get out of the way as far as the kitchen tables of Alabama are concerned."

Reed said he thought Griffith's time with the GOP might appeal to state voters.

"Most of them are Republicans, anyway," he said.

Montgomery's contests

Grimes, whose old district was moved to Shelby County under redistricting approved in 2012, said John Knight was his reason for running.

"John Knight inherited so much of my old District 73," he said in a phone interview Friday afternoon. "I do not feel in any way he can serve those people because he does not share the values those people share. He is a Democrat. He is a liberal Democrat."

Knight, who has served in the House of Representatives since 1993, declined to comment on Grimes' remarks Friday, saying he was a "fine person."

"I think the values I represent are the values of the people I represent," he said. "I've worked for economic development, I've worked for low-income working people."

Knight's district has a heavy Democratic tilt, and Grimes acknowledged the difficulties a Republican would face in the campaign. He said he will try to tell voters he is the candidate who could best "support them and their families' security in state government."

If elected, Grimes said he would work toward unifying the state's two budgets, saying it would bring order to the sometimes chaotic plans and make it easier to give pay raises to state employees.

"Every year, one (budget) is poor and one is rich," he said. "And that's not for the betterment of the state or the people."

Ford could not be reached for comment Friday. Ingram has said he will make job creation a priority in his campaign.

#### Other contests

- Bentley faces Stacy Lee George, a corrections officer, and Bob Starkey, a businessman, in the Republican primary. Kevin Bass, a former minor league baseball player, will challenge Griffith for the Democrats' nomination.
- Lt. Gov. Kay Ivey, a Republican, will face Stan Cooke, a Jefferson County minister, in the GOP primary. Former Rep. James Fields, D-Cullman, will be the Democrats' nominee.
- Alabama Attorney General Luther Strange, a Republican, will seek re-election against Joe Hubbard, a Democratic Representative from Montgomery.
- State Treasurer Young Boozer, a Republican, will seek re-election against Joe Cottle, a Democrat.
- The Republican field for State Auditor includes Dale Peterson, a Hoover businessman and former candidate for Agriculture Commissioner; Adam Thompson, deputy Secretary of State; Anniston attorney Ray Bryan; Mobile attorney Jim Zeigler and Hobbie Sealey, a former deputy Agriculture Commissioner. Miranda Joseph, who was the Democrats' nominee for the office in 2010, will run again.

## **The lay of the land heading into 2014 Alabama House and Senate races (Yellowhammer News)**

2010 was a historic year in Alabama politics. 136 consecutive years of Democratic control in the Alabama legislature came to an end as Republicans won supermajorities in both the House and Senate. Since then, both Republicans and Democrats have started adapting to the new lay of the land, as have lobbyists, trade associations and other interest groups in Montgomery.

Former Rep. Seth Hammett, D-Andalusia, who was Speaker of the Alabama House from 1999-2010, needed to build a coalition to pass legislation. He would either get white Democrats and the Democratic Black Caucus to vote together to advance a bill, or he would get white Democrats and Republicans to team up. House Speaker Mike Hubbard, R-Auburn, has not had to do much coalition building because Republicans now have the numbers to pretty much pass whatever they want. Things have been slightly more fractured in the Senate on rare occasions, but it is difficult for Democrats to mount an effective defense in either chamber at this point.

Outside groups that have historically aligned with Democrats have even had to change their tune. For instance, as the Montgomery Advertiser's Bryan Lyman astutely noted over the weekend, the trial lawyers' association donated 94 percent of its money to Democrats during the 2010 election cycle (roughly \$2 million), but has completely changed course since then. Over 80 percent of their legislative contributions in 2013 and so far in 2014 went to Republicans.

But one historically left-leaning group in Montgomery that has not shifted at all is the Alabama Education Association (AEA). Rather than moderating its positions and trying to work with Republicans, the AEA has doubled down on backing Democrats. They are also working to play a larger role in GOP primaries by recruiting candidates to take on incumbent Republicans and to fill open seats. Some insiders expect the AEA to spend \$7-10 million in 2014 to dilute the GOP majorities.

The AEA has been fairly successful in Republican special elections since 2010, so they will try to build on that by targeting the open House and Senate seats this year. In addition to giving directly to candidates, they have also launched an affiliated group called Alabama Values Education. Expect them to run millions of dollars in ads under that banner this cycle as well.

The AEA is basically on an island by itself — one of the last remaining remnants of a time to which most Alabamians do not want to return. However, in addition to its unmatched financial resources, the AEA also now has another advantage that Republicans used in their favor in 2010 — a “throw the bums out” atmosphere. The anti-incumbent sentiment of the current electorate is not necessarily aimed at the Alabama legislature, but is rather the result of the pent up frustration that voters across the country feel toward elected officials in general from both parties. The AEA is hoping to use that to

their advantage, especially among Tea Party groups, whose ranks the AEA has maneuvered to infiltrate with political operatives.

On the Republican side of the aisle, the Business Council, Forestry Association, Farmers Federation, Realtors Association, Trial Lawyers Association, Trucking Association and 2014 PAC will be some of the key players. A similar coalition of groups, with the exception of the trial lawyers, helped usher in the Republican majority in 2010. PACs controlled by lobbying powerhouses like Fine Geddie & Associates, former Lt. Gov. Steve Windom, and Swatek Azbell Howe and Ross will also be significant sources of funds for incumbent legislators of both parties.

But as important as financial resources are to winning elections, grassroots organizations will also play a role in legislative races this year.

Groups like the Rainy Day Patriots and Wetumpka Tea Party have built up trust among conservative voters in certain areas of the state, and will have an opportunity to turn their influence into votes if they are able to organize themselves effectively. The Wetumpka Tea Party showed their ability to do exactly that by making their home county (Elmore) one of the only areas of the state to vote down Amendment 1 in 2012, which authorized the state to borrow \$437 million from the Alabama Trust Fund to prevent cuts to state services. Their founding president, Becky Gerritson, recently announced that she is moving to Texas, so it will be worth watching to see if that impacts their ability to organize.

2014 PAC, which is helmed by former Gov. Bob Riley, has also begun putting field operatives in some parts of the state to help organize at the grassroots level. In addition to vast financial resources, Republican candidates who ran for public office for the first time in 2010 were also given access to campaign consultants and field staffers who helped them run their campaigns. There will likely be some growing pains during this cycle as some first-term incumbent Republicans have to take on a much greater role in their own campaigns than they did in 2010.

Interestingly, the actual state parties probably won't play a very significant role in 2014 legislative races. The Democrats are in shambles, with no ability to raise money and poor candidates (see: Griffith, Parker). The ALGOP has also struggled to raise money over the last couple of years and has experienced a good bit turnover in some of their top political staff positions.

Here's the bottom line: everyone mentioned above will be fighting over a relatively small number of seats in the legislature. Most incumbents from both parties are in pretty good shape. There are 12 open seats in the House that the AEA will try to gain control of. But the Senate is what will really be worth watching. There are currently 23 Republicans in the Senate. It takes 21 senators to invoke cloture, which basically means Republicans can end debate and pass any bill they want, even if

Democrats are filibustering. If the AEA could just carve off three seats they could destroy Republicans' filibuster-proof majority and grind the Senate to a halt.

## **Once big backers of Democrats, trial lawyers now spending big on Republicans (Montgomery Advertiser)**

The Alabama Democratic Party and the state's trial lawyers once danced in time with one another, whether the beat was familiar, fussy or — in 2010 — frenzied.

That year, the Alabama Association for Justice (ALAJ) — once known as the Alabama Trial Lawyers' Association — pumped more than \$2 million into the state's legislative races, and 94 percent of it went to Democrats or Democratic-leaning PACs.

The party alone got more than \$700,000 from ALAJ's TRIAL PAC, which got more than \$1 million from executives at Montgomery-based Beasley Allen, one of the most prosperous law firms in the state. Jere Beasley, the founder of the firm and a former lieutenant governor, gave TRIAL PAC a single donation of \$134,600 on Sept. 20, 2010, exceeded only by shareholder Greg Allen, who gave the PAC \$155,000 that same day.

Just six Republican candidates received donations from the group, and the aggregate of giving to the GOP and its allies was less than \$80,000.

But the music changed that November, and the trial lawyers decided to get in step with a new partner.

From the beginning of 2013 through the end of January, more than 81 percent of TRIAL PAC's donations went to Republican candidates. In the current cycle, ALAJ has donated to 42 Republican campaigns and 13 Democratic ones.

While the Republican landslide of 2010 changed state government, few organizations changed their profile as much as the ALAJ, long regarded as a key component of the Democratic coalition. For its part, the group says it remains committed to protecting the rights of citizens to access to the courts, whichever party is in power.

"Protection of the Seventh Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and a right to trial by jury knows no party," Ginger Avery, the executive director of the ALAJ, said in a statement Friday. "The Alabama Association for Justice supports candidates who stand up for justice and constitutional rights."

Despite the tilt of its funding, past and present, the group insists it has always been nonpartisan. At the same time, said Gibson Vance, a past president of the ALAJ and Beasley Allen shareholder, the organization needs to advance its goals.

"The political reality is you want as many friends as you can in the Legislature," he said. "But the folks you need to have a good relationship with are the ones with the power, the ones in charge."

The ones in charge give the ALAJ high marks.

"They've done a good job adapting," said Sen. Cam Ward, R-Alabaster, the chairman of the Senate Judiciary committee. "They don't get the wins they used to get. It used to be automatic. They won every time. Now they have to work on every single bill that comes up."

Bill Armistead, chairman of the Alabama Republican Party, said he was "encouraged" that the GOP and the trial lawyers aren't duking it out.

"The giving follows the fact you can work together," he said. "The giving follows the working together. If we were battling each other, I'd say they'd be finding Democratic candidates to run against us, but the fact is we don't have many Democratic candidates opposing Republican candidates."

'We never give up'

For Democrats looking to revitalize their party, the shift will make it that much more difficult to dig out of the 2010 landslide. Nancy Worley, the chairwoman of the Alabama Democratic Party, said Democrats were a more natural fit for the group than Republicans, who have long prioritized tort reform.

"We never give up on a group or a person," she said. "Certainly, they've been supportive of us through the years, and vice versa."

Mark Kennedy, a former chairman of the Alabama Democratic Party who served on the Alabama Supreme Court, said the shift was obvious during his tenure, which began shortly after the 2010 elections.

"I don't know if that's a philosophical shift as to what trial lawyers believe, or political expediency," said Kennedy, who now heads Alabama Democratic Majority. "Obviously, trial lawyers, as all lawyers do, live and die by statutes created by the Legislature and interpreted by the courts."

Vance said his firm was “not as much interested as to which party is in power,” and felt the trial lawyers’ affiliation with Democrats was more about habit.

“I think you saw decades of one party being in charge, and the relationships at that time were more with that party,” he said. “When it flipped, it allowed us to reassess where we were politically as an organization. We made a decision we wanted to be identified less as a partisan group.”

Avery echoed those sentiments in her statement.

“As an organization, we are not beholden to a party, but instead we are beholden to the issue of ensuring people have the right to seek justice in a courtroom,” the statement said. “Many Republicans have proven that they are willing to protect the Seventh Amendment right to a trial by jury.”

Lower profiles

ALAJ kept a notably low profile during the 2012 campaign for Alabama Chief Justice; in fact, its campaign records show its limited donations that year all went to Republicans, and none to the judicial race. Jere Beasley had been an enthusiastic supporter of Democrat Sue Bell Cobb in her race for Chief Justice in 2006, but told the Advertiser in 2012 he had no plans to get involved in the campaigns of Republican Roy Moore or Democrat Robert Vance.

“Lawyers don’t need to be participating in judicial elections,” he said. “Neither do corporations. In my opinion, it’s time to change.”

Beasley Allen and other major contributors to ALAJ in 2010 have, to this point, sat on their wallets. Through Jan. 31, Beasley Allen’s executives gave just \$32,000 to the organization, and had not donated anything since May 30 of last year. The firm has given \$14,000 directly to eight Senate candidates — six Republicans and two Democrats.

Gibson Vance said last week the firm is still measuring the election, and would “continue to donate in a major way” to ALAJ.

“Every cycle is different and every cycle has a life of its own,” he said. “We feel we will be substantially involved. Less or more? It’s hard to say at this point.”

Mobile-based Cunningham Bounds, whose members gave at least \$453,000 to ALAJ in 2010, have sent TRIAL PAC just \$5,000 in the current cycle. Hare Wynn Newell & Newton, based in Birmingham, gave over \$347,000 to TRIAL PAC in 2010, but \$15,000 through January. Attempts to reach both firms last week were unsuccessful.



Both Vance and Sen. Ward — one of two Republicans to receive trial lawyer money in both 2010 and 2014 — said a turning point came in 2011, when the GOP pushed through a tort reform package in the Legislature. The group decided to sit down with lawmakers and community business representatives, and negotiate.

“I think that was a wake-up call,” Ward said. “They realized, ‘Look, there’s going to be some changes. There’s a change in leadership here, and it’s probably going to be best to work with the leadership, or you’re going to become irrelevant.’”

Vance said the organization had to give way on some issues, such as interest on post-judgment cases, but that they were able to get outcomes that, at the very least, they could live with.

“The key leadership has asked the sides to sit down and compromise on issues, rather than have blood baths,” he said. “It’s better for the Legislature.”

Ward, however, said Republicans still carry “a lot of bills they don’t like,” such as one Ward sponsored last year imposing a time limit on lawsuits against airplane manufacturers.

“It’s much less confrontational than some other groups,” he said. “If they don’t like a bill, they’ll come and say ‘Look we don’t like this bill.’ We’ll say ‘Look, we can’t help you, but maybe we can work together.’”

For his part, Vance thinks Republicans have reached the political limits of tort reform.

“There’s so many other issues in the state, that the average voter does not care about tort reform, and I think the legislators have realized that,” he said. “It’s not an issue for their constituents.”

Despite that new relationship, and the movement of funds, Worley said it was “too early” in the cycle to count out their support.

“Many organizations want to be on whichever side is in power at the moment,” she said. “If the Republicans are in power at the moment, they shift that way. If they Democrats come back in power, they’ll shift to the Democrats.”

**[Four years after historic takeover of Legislature, Mobile GOP still playing offense \(al.com\)](#)**

In the first election since Republicans swept to power in the Legislature in 2010 for the first time since the 19th century, GOP leaders in the Port City indicated Friday that they are not finished playing offense.

The party will field candidates in a pair of Democratic-leaning state House of Representatives districts in Mobile County.

Saraland City Councilman Wayne Biggs, 58, qualified by the Friday deadline to run as a Republican in House District 98, located in northern Mobile County. On the Democratic side, state Rep. Napoleon Bracy will meet Darren Flott in a rematch of the 2010 primary.

In House District 103, Ralph Carmichael is the only Republican candidate. He will face the winner of a Democratic primary between Barbara Drummond, who served as an aide to former Mobile Mayor Sam Jones, and Charlie Staten, who unsuccessfully ran for the state Senate in 2002. The incumbent, Democrat Joseph Mitchell, is not running for another term.

Terry Lathan, the chairwoman of the Mobile County Republican Party, said she believes redistricting gives the GOP a chance for both seats.

"We're real proud to have put some candidates in those races to give people a choice," she said.

Both districts, though, retain healthy black majorities. Black voters generally overwhelmingly support Democratic candidates. And Bracy, who chairs the Mobile County Democratic Party, said he was happy with candidates that the party has recruited.

"I think we did pretty good," he said. "It's definitely a rebuilding period for the Democratic Party."

Biggs, who is in the coffee services business, said he had encouraged a fellow Saraland councilman to run and then decided take up the mantle when that didn't work out.

"I felt we needed a conservative Republican in that seat to represent north Mobile County," he said. "It's been a tough few years.

Carmichael is coming off an unsuccessful bid for the Legislature in neighboring District 104, where he lost in the GOP primary in a special election. Redistricting has placed his home in District 103, which covers southern Mobile and points south.

In the Senate District 22, five Republicans have lined up for a shot at a seat that the GOP long has coveted but has been unable to win. Redistricting has improved the terrain dramatically for the party, but incumbent Marc Keahey, a Grove Hill Democrat who submitted his qualifying papers Friday, has proved an adept campaigner.

The Republican challengers include:

Danny Joyner, a tea party activist from Escambia County, who has run three previous times.

Harry D'Olive, a Bay Minette lawyer who has run unsuccessfully for Baldwin County probate judge.

Stephen Sexton, a U.S. Army veteran from Bay Minette.

Greg Albritton, a former state representative from Range who lost to Keahey in a special election for the Senate in 2009.

Jeff Peacock, who narrowly lost the 2010 GOP primary to Joyner.

The Democrats will have a challenger in one area Republican-held legislative district. Political newcomer Beau Doolittle qualified to run in Senate District 35, making up the southern portion of Mobile County. Sen. Bill Hightower, R-Mobile, is unopposed for the GOP nomination.

In a prepared statement, Doolittle indicated he intends to be a champion of the middle and working classes. The Theodore resident, who works for the Alabama Department of Human Resources, said almost 90 percent of the state's senators come from professions that are not part of the middle class.

"For years middle and working class people have been misled by politicians using social wedge issues to gain our votes only to do the economic bidding of big insurance companies and other wealthy donors," he said in the statement. "This campaign isn't about any national politicians, brand names or symbols. This is a local race and the issues should reveal who will do a better job representing the citizens of District 35."

The rest of the competitive legislative races from southwest Alabama will be primary contests within the GOP.

District 64 in Baldwin and Monroe counties pits Rep. Harry Shiver, R-Bay Minette, against his former student, James Hall.

"I taught him in school and coached him in football," said Shiver, who is seeking a third term. "I don't know why he's running."

Shiver, 67, suffered a stroke two years ago. But he said he has fully recovered. In office, he has pushed legislation that would broaden the rights of grandparents to visit their grandchildren.

Hall, a production supervisor from Stapleton, tried to run as an independent for Congress in a special election last year but failed to gather enough signatures to get on the ballot. He said he had planned to run for the state House all along before Rep. Jo Bonner's resignation last summer triggered the special election for the 1st Congressional District seat.

Hall, 39, said running as a Republican has been one of the hardest decisions of his life because he feels the party has drifted from its conservative roots.

"Like a lot of us, I've been frustrated with government in general – federal, state and local," he said. "Historically, I've always been a Republican. ... In my heart, I feel like I'm an independent. I really feel like I'm a Republican from the '80s."

In District 101, centered in the Spring Hill area of Mobile, former state Rep. Chris Pringle is seeking to return to his old seat. Incumbent Jamie Ison, R-Mobile, has announced she will not run for re-election.

Pringle has touted his prior legislative experience.

Don Hembree, who has a heating and air conditioning contracting business, is challenging Pringle in the primary. "I just see the need to have some fresh perspective in the Legislature," he said. "I'm definitely pro-business, but also to do it in a way that's environmentally responsible."

Three Republicans qualified to try to succeed retiring Rep. Chad Fincher, R-Semmes, in District 102 in western and northern Mobile.

Wilmer resident Jack Williams, who owns the largest commercial nursery in Mobile County, said he supports small business and agriculture.

"I decided to run after praying about it for several months, and several people have asked me to," he said. "The second reason is we need good Christians up there, not pencil-pushers."

Also running are Anthony Clarkbanks and Chris McNeil, who could not be reached for comment.

The other area representatives and senators for southwest Alabama have no opposition in the primary or general election. That includes Margie Wilcox, who last week won a special election to fill the remaining few months of former Rep. Jim Barton's term in House District 104.

Legislative pay is equal to the state's mediate household income. Senators and representatives serve four-year terms.

## **'Tis (still) the season: February deer season in Alabama likely to be expanded next year (Montgomery Advertiser)**

For Chris Stone, the state extending deer season to Feb. 10 in some parts of southwest Alabama has been an economic boost that should become a boom in the future.

He operates Stone Cattle and Hunting, a commercial hunting lodge on family-owned farm land in Pine Apple. He's also the mayor of the small Wilcox County hamlet, population 145 in 2010, according to census figures.

"We've had hunters come down during the February season, so for us it has been good," he said. "As word gets out, we will have more interest and other lodges will have more interest. I hope they don't change the later season. I hope the state even expands it in the future."

Looks like he might get his wish.

Talk of extending the season into February has been going on for years. This season marks the first time it has been done. And from all initial reports, it has been a success, said Ray Metzler, acting director of the wildlife division of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

"This is our first year of the extended season, and we still have data to study," he said. "But we have received nothing but positive feedback from hunters and outfitters in that area. It looks like the February season will stay in place, and you may see the area expanded for the upcoming season."

The February season includes all of Mobile, Baldwin, Escambia and Conecuh counties and portions of Wilcox, Monroe, Choctaw, Clarke and Covington counties. The move was made because years of data had shown that breeding season, or the rut, peaks later in those areas than other parts of the state, Metzler said.

In the rest of the state, archery season opens in mid-October, with firearms season usually opening the Saturday before Thanksgiving. Outside the southwest zone, deer season ends Jan. 31.

Hunters prefer to hunt during breeding season since mature bucks are often more active during that time as they chase does.

Adding more area to the February season is just what is needed for the state's Black Belt region, said Pam Swanner, project manager for Alabama Black Belt Adventures. It's a nonprofit organization touting hunting, fishing and outdoor activities to benefit economic development in the 23 counties of the Black Belt region. Named for its dark, loamy soil, the Black Belt is known nationwide for the hunting opportunities it offers. The crescent-shaped region runs west to east, bisecting the central part of the state.

Any addition to areas in the February season logically would encompass more of the Black Belt, Swanner said.

"Hunting is a huge business in Alabama," she said. "Our figures show it is a total benefit of more than \$1 billion a year for our 23-county area. That takes into consideration all the times the hunters' dollar turns over — restaurants, feed and seed stores, gas stations. Anything we can do to make the area more attractive to out-of-state hunters is a good thing.

"Alabama is a destination for hunters around the country whose home states have much shorter deer seasons. If we can offer an expanded February season, in the height of the rut, it will mean a boost for the entire region and the state as a whole."

The description of extending deer season into February is a bit of a misnomer. Hunters in the area have a split season, giving up hunting Dec. 1-10 in order to go afield Feb. 1-10.

That's the key, said Steve Marshall, a Prattville hunter.

"Nobody is getting extra days, so that keeps the hunters outside the area from fighting it," he said. "If you have access to hunt land in that zone, and you wind up having a few more days to hunt, then good for you."

Even losing the 10 days in December isn't a big deal on the Stone place. They got serious about outfitting in 1992, Stone said. Even so, it's a small operation, cutting off at six hunters per group for the 3,200 or so acres on the family farm.

Hunters pay \$400 a day if they cook their own food and \$450 a day if the lodge supplies meals, with a three-day minimum to book the services.

"We haven't had much December hunting for the last several years," he said. "The hot time is January and the rut, so the extended season is perfect for us."

The wildlife division of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources now is working on making recommendations about the extended season. Those recommendations will be forwarded to N. Gunter Guy Jr., the department's commissioner, Metzler said. The recommendations also will go to the Conservation Advisory Board, the group that makes suggestions to the commissioner relating to seasons and regulations.

Those recommendations will be made at the March 1 meeting of the advisory board in Montgomery, Metzler said. The board won't act on the recommendations then, he added. The soonest the board could take up the matter is the April 1 meeting.

## **Eric Holder set to extend recognition of same-sex marriage rights to all states (AP)**

WASHINGTON (AP) -- In an assertion of same-sex marriage rights, Attorney General Eric Holder is applying a landmark Supreme Court ruling to the Justice Department, announcing Saturday that same-sex spouses cannot be compelled to testify against each other, should be eligible to file for bankruptcy jointly and are entitled to the same rights and privileges as federal prison inmates in opposite-sex marriages.

The Justice Department runs a number of benefits programs, and Holder says same-sex couples will qualify for them. They include the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund and benefits to surviving spouses of public safety officers who suffer catastrophic or fatal injuries in the line of duty.

"In every courthouse, in every proceeding and in every place where a member of the Department of Justice stands on behalf of the United States, they will strive to ensure that same-sex marriages receive the same privileges, protections and rights as opposite-sex marriages under federal law," Holder said in prepared remarks to the Human Rights Campaign in New York. The advocacy group works on behalf of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equal rights.

Just as in the civil rights struggles of the 1960s, the stakes in the current generation over same-sex marriage rights "could not be higher," said Holder.

"The Justice Department's role in confronting discrimination must be as aggressive today as it was in Robert Kennedy's time," Holder said of the attorney general who played a leadership role in advancing civil rights.

On Monday, the Justice Department will issue a policy memo to its employees instructing them to give lawful same-sex marriages full and equal recognition, to the greatest extent possible under the law.

Holder's address is the latest application of a Supreme Court ruling that struck down a provision in the Defense of Marriage Act defining marriage as the union of one man and one woman. The decision applies to legally married same-sex couples seeking federal benefits.

After the Supreme Court decision last June, the Treasury Department and the IRS said that all legally married gay couples may file joint federal tax returns, even if they reside in states that do not recognize same-sex marriages. The Defense Department said it would grant military spousal benefits to same-sex couples. The Health and Human Services Department said the Defense of Marriage Act is no longer a bar to states recognizing same-sex marriages under state Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Programs. The U.S. Office of Personnel Management said it is now able to extend benefits to legally married same-sex spouses of federal employees and annuitants.

Holder told his audience:

--The Justice Department will recognize that same-sex spouses of individuals involved in civil and criminal cases should have the same legal rights as all other married couples, including the right to decline to give testimony that might violate the marital privilege. Under this policy, even in states where same-sex marriages are not recognized, the federal government will not use state views as a basis to object to someone in a same-sex marriage from invoking this right.

--The U.S. Trustee Program will take the position that same-sex married couples should be eligible to file for bankruptcy jointly and that domestic support obligations should include debts such as alimony owed to a former same-sex spouse.

-- Federal prisoners in same-sex marriages will be entitled to visitation by a spouse, inmate furloughs during a crisis involving a spouse, escorted trips to attend a spouse's funeral, correspondence with a spouse and compassionate release or reduction in sentence based on an inmate's spouse being incapacitated.