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**Editorials**

Published Monday, September 24, 2007

**King ignores justice in grandstanding**

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Attorney General Troy King's actions have gotten him crosswise with people who should be working with him hand-in-glove – the state's district attorneys.

The prosecutors have taken offense at King's hand-ling of a death penalty case in Shelby County. The attorney general took over the case from Shelby DA Robby Owens, accusing him of an "inexcusable violation of his oath of office" because Owens testified that an 18-year-old accomplice who didn't fire a shot in a double homicide should have his death sentence changed to life without parole.

Owens, a Republican like King, said he took the position because a U.S. Supreme Court ruling banning execution of juveniles. That ruling caused the 16-year-old gunman's death sentence to be switched to life without parole. Owens said he could not justify giving a harsher sentence to the gunman's accomplice.

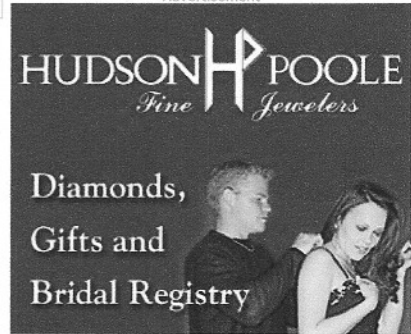
That decision drew a public rebuke from King, who said he would not turn his back on the victims.

His diatribe drew a protest from 41 of the state's 42 district attorneys. About 30 of them attended a news conference last Monday, where they demanded an apology and questioned King's legal fitness for the job.

The question is apropos. A political scientist at Auburn University says King could have quietly taken over the case from the district attorney without publicly criticizing him. And a law professor at the University of Alabama said King would be handling the state's appeal of the case anyway.

The district attorneys noted that King had never argued a death case before a jury before Gov. Bob Riley appointed him attorney general in 2004.

King's actions on the Shelby case makes him seem more interested in political grandstanding than in the fair administration of justice.



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