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DA group leader takes aim at King

Says AG 'has no idea' on death penalty cases

Friday, September 21, 2007

KIM CHANDLER News staff writer

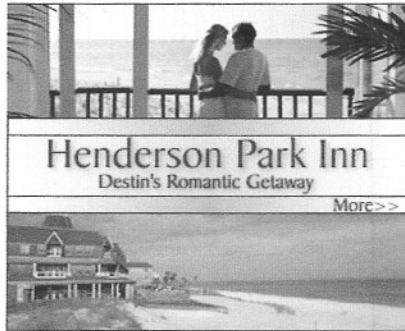
MONTGOMERY - The president of the Alabama District Attorneys Association on Thursday said Alabama Attorney General Troy King, who recently took over a capital murder case from a Shelby County prosecutor, doesn't have the experience to understand death penalty issues.

"The attorney general has no idea about these things because he has never stood where we stand every day," Association President Ken Davis said in a statement released Thursday. "Many of our members were fighting for the rights of victims when the attorney general was still in grammar school."

King said the district attorneys were turning their back on victims.

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The war of words between district attorneys and King continued Thursday after King took over a case from Shelby County District Attorney Robby Owens because King wanted to reinstate the death penalty in the case.

King announced last week with a press release that he was taking over the case of LaSamuel Gamble, who was convicted along with Marcus Presley of killing John Burleson and Janice Littleton during the 1996 robbery of John's 280 Pawn.

Gamble and Presley were sentenced to die after Owens argued for the death penalty. However, Presley, the triggerman, got off Death Row because of a U.S. Supreme Court decision that barred capital punishment for anyone who was younger than 18 when committing a crime.

At a later court hearing, Owens testified that he thought it was unfair for Gamble to be put to death while the triggerman lives. Shelby County Circuit Judge Michael Joiner subsequently moved Gamble off Death Row.

District attorneys from across the state held a press conference Monday calling on King to apologize to Owens. King responded with a press conference with the family of Burleson, saying he was fulfilling a 2006 promise to the victim's widow.

"Further evidence of the attorney general playing politics with this critical issue is that no previous attorney general ever issued a press release concurrently with the adoption of a case from a district attorney," Davis wrote in his statement Thursday.

King said he issued a press release because people had a right to know what their government was doing.

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