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Attorney General Steve Marshall Announces Former Limestone County District Judge Sentenced to Serve Four Years in Prison for Ethics, Exploitation, Theft Convictions

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Steve Marshall announced that former Limestone County district judge Douglas Lee Patterson has been sentenced to serve four years in prison. Patterson pleaded guilty on October 30 to three felony charges: use of official position or office for personal gain, financial exploitation of the elderly in the first degree, and theft of property in the third degree.

For each of the counts of ethics violation and financial exploitation, Patterson was sentenced today to 16 years, which was split for him to serve four years in prison followed by six years of supervised probation. Patterson is required to serve all of the four years in prison, and if he fails to abide by the terms of probation, he could be ordered to serve the remainder of the 16 years in prison. For the third count of theft, he was sentenced to two years. All of the sentences run concurrently. He also was ordered to pay restitution totaling \$72,822 to his victims.

“It is fitting that Patterson has received a stern sentence for his crimes and that we have brought a measure of justice for his victims,” said Attorney General Marshall. “He betrayed the citizens of Limestone County and exploited those who trusted him, stealing from the most vulnerable among us – children, the disabled and the elderly. This sentence serves to restore the public confidence in our judicial system and sends a strong warning that such despicable actions will not be tolerated, and all will be held equally to account under the law.”

FBI Birmingham Special Agent in Charge Johnnie Sharp Jr., said, “Everyone, even judges, are subject to the rule of law. The sentence handed down today demonstrates the FBI’s firm commitment to work with our law enforcement partners to address public corruption at every level and hold public officials accountable when they violate the law, their oath of office and the public’s trust.”

As part of Patterson’s plea agreement, he admitted to violating his oath of office and Alabama law by stealing \$47,800 from the Limestone County Juvenile Court Services Fund which was designated to support the children of Limestone County. As Limestone County’s juvenile court judge, Patterson could and did impose supervision

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fees in certain juvenile cases, which he later stole and used for his own personal benefit. By the time Patterson's actions were discovered, he had emptied the juvenile account.

Patterson also admitted in court that, while serving as a private attorney, he financially exploited Charles Lee Hardy, for whom he served as a court-appointed conservator. Hardy, who died in December 2015, was a disabled military veteran living in a nursing home. Patterson disregarded his obligation to protect Hardy's finances and instead plundered his account by taking Hardy's money and spending it on himself. By the time Hardy died, Patterson had emptied his account and left his family nothing to inherit from the account.

Finally, Patterson admitted that he stole from another conservatorship client, Rudolph Allen, while in private practice. In this case, Patterson stole \$601 from Allen three years after he died in July 2015. Patterson spent the money on himself rather than turn it over to Allen's family.

Attorney General Marshall thanked the Birmingham Division/Huntsville Resident Agency of the FBI for partnering with his Special Prosecutions Division to investigate this matter. Attorney General Marshall also thanked Presiding Circuit Court Judge Robert Baker of the Limestone County Circuit Court as well as the other employees of the Limestone County judiciary for their assistance and cooperation in this matter. He commended the attorneys and Special Agents of the Attorney General's Special Prosecutions Division for their outstanding work to achieve this conviction.