



Attorney General Steve Marshall Announces Conviction of Former Limestone County District Court Judge on Ethics, Exploitation and Theft Charges

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Steve Marshall announced the conviction Friday of Douglas Lee Patterson, a former district court judge in the 39th Judicial Circuit in Limestone County, on 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.

On October 30, Patterson pleaded guilty in the Limestone County Circuit Court to the above three felonies before specially appointed Judge Steven E. Haddock. Judge Haddock set sentencing for December 8 at 1:30 p.m. The ethics charge and the financial exploitation charge are Class B felonies punishable by up to 20 years of imprisonment and a \$30,000 fine. The theft charge is punishable by up to five years of imprisonment and a \$7,500 fine.

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 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.

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“Patterson’s actions as an attorney and as a judge tarnished and debased the judicial system,” said Attorney General Marshall. “His conviction sends a clear message that public officials who abuse their position, harm vulnerable parties, and flagrantly disregard Alabama law will be held accountable for their crimes.”

FBI Birmingham Special Agent in Charge Johnnie Sharp Jr., said, “Patterson used his position as a judge for private gain, thus undermining the integrity of government and eroding the public’s trust. The FBI will continue to make public corruption investigations a top priority, and we will continue to work with our partners to investigate and root out public corruption wherever it exists.”

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.