

## NEWS RELEASE

# Luther Strange

Alabama Attorney General



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## AG PRESENTS SUMMIT FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Luther Strange today presented the 12<sup>th</sup> annual Attorney General’s Law Enforcement Summit, carrying on a tradition that was begun in 2000 by former Attorney General Bill Pryor. More than 650 law enforcement officers from throughout Alabama had registered to attend and receive practical information and professional training, with a primary focus on sentencing and incarceration concerns. In addition, Attorney General Strange also presented an update on activities of the Attorney General’s Office since he took office in January. A somber highlight of the day came with the commemoration of fallen officers who lost their lives in the past year. The 2011 summit was held in Birmingham.

Attorney General Strange welcomed law enforcement officers and discussed the event’s theme. “Our state faces a crisis in how to effectively manage the sentencing and incarceration of the growing numbers of criminals. Justice demands that these criminals must be punished and that our citizens must be protected. We are honored that many who are at the forefront of this difficult issue have agreed to share their experience and wisdom with us here today.”

This year’s conference featured a series of presentations from experts that included the following: “The Truth about Alabama’s Ability to Punish Criminals,” from Bennet Wright, Executive Director, Alabama Sentencing Commission; “The Role of the Sentencing Commission, Establishing Honesty in Sentencing,” from Judge Joseph Colquitt, Chairman of the Alabama Sentencing Commission; “Cutting Prison Growth,” from Rep. Jerry Madden of the Texas State Legislature; “Department of Corrections Update” from Commissioner Kim Thomas; “Emerging Threats to Public Safety,” by Laurie Wood of the Intelligence Project, and “What’s Next in the Legislature?” from Barry Matson, Deputy Director, Alabama Office of Prosecution Services. A panel discussion titled “The Revolving Door: Local Initiatives that Work” was moderated by Steve Marshall, District Attorney for the 27<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit, with discussion from Judge J. Michael Joiner of the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals; Gary Knight, Director, Houston County Community Corrections; and Captain Jimmy Milton, Director of Baldwin County Community Directions.

In addition to the above topics related to sentencing and corrections, the conference included a presentation from Director Spencer Collier of the Alabama Department of Homeland Security about the status of Alabama’s immigration law. This law designates the Department of Homeland Security as the agency to make rules for its



enforcement and to coordinate with state and local law enforcement the practices and methods required for its enforcement. The role of the Attorney General's Office regarding the new immigration law is to represent State of Alabama defendants in litigation that is ongoing. Therefore, inquiries about the law's enforcement are properly directed to the Alabama Department of Homeland Security rather than to the Attorney General's Office.

Attorney General Strange introduced to law enforcement officers the leaders of a professional and experienced team he assembled in January who have been committed to investigate and prosecute public corruption and other crimes with integrity and dedication. These include Chief Investigator Tim Fuhrman, a long-time veteran of the Federal Bureau of Investigation; Chief Deputy Investigator Jesse Seroyer, whose career included many years in the Attorney General's Office previously as well as a term as U.S. Marshal in Montgomery; and Assistant Attorney General John Gibbs, who returned to the Attorney General's Office to again head the Public Corruption and White Collar Crime Division. He commended the officers gathered at the summit for their heroic acts as first-responders to protect their fellow citizens and assist their communities when tornadoes devastated parts of Alabama last April.

The Attorney General honored law enforcement officers who gave their lives during the last year with the presentation of memorial flags for families of the following:

- Officer Trevor Scott Phillips, Tuscaloosa Police Department

On May 21, 2011, Officer Trevor Scott Phillips was killed in the line of duty while escorting a funeral procession when a vehicle in the procession abruptly made a u-turn in front of his motorcycle. At the time of his death Officers Phillip was assigned to the traffic division where he had worked since July 2007. Officer Phillips was a veteran police officer with 10 years and seven months of service; he was also a member of the Tuscaloosa Police Department Special Response Team. He was 42 years old.

- Officer Justin Sollohub of the Anniston Police Department

Officer Justin Sollohub succumbed on August 25, 2011, to a gunshot wound sustained the previous day while he was involved in a foot pursuit. Officer Sollohub was on patrol when he stopped his vehicle to make contact with a pedestrian near the intersection of 19<sup>th</sup> Street and Moore Avenue. As Officer Sollohub exited his patrol car the man fled on foot.

As Officer Sollohub chased the man around the side of a house he was shot once in the head. A responding officer located him and immediately began tending to his wound. He was transported to a local hospital before being flown to Birmingham. He remained on life support until his organs could be donated.

The man who shot Officer Sollohub was arrested later in the day after a massive manhunt. He faces capital murder charges in connection with Officer Sollohub's murder. Officer Sollohub served with the Anniston Police Department for two years, and is survived by his parents. He was 27 years old.

- Officer Donald Newman of the Jemison Police Department

Officer Donald Newman was killed on March 5, 2011, in an automobile accident while responding to head-on vehicle crash involving children. His patrol car hydroplaned during a period of heavy rain and struck a utility pole on U.S. Highway 31. Officer Newman had served with the Jemison Police Department for just over two years and had previously served as a military police officer in the U.S. Air Force for six years. He is survived by his wife and four-year-old son. He was 30 years old.

Attorney General Strange thanked the officers in attendance today, and expressed gratitude to their fellow officers in communities throughout Alabama. "I am grateful and proud of the bravery and unselfish dedication that law enforcement officers give to people of Alabama in their service to us each day," he said. "It is my hope that this conference has provided valuable instruction and shared information that you will take back to your communities and that it may be of assistance as you carry out your noble task of protecting the people of Alabama."