

**AG STRANGE ANNOUNCES ARRESTS OF ENTIRE BULLOCK COUNTY COMMISSION ON FELONY BID LAW CHARGES**

(MONTGOMERY)- – Attorney General Luther Strange announced the arrests of all five members of the Bullock County Commission on felony charges of bid law violations. The commission chairman is additionally charged with an ethics law violation.

Commission Chairman Ronald Wynord Smith, 56, of Union Springs, was arrested last night, as was Commissioner John Livingston Adams, 43, also of Union Springs. The remaining commissioners, who were arrested today, are Dock McGowan, 82, of Banks; Alonza Ellis Jr., 45, of Union Springs; and James McArthur Perry, 64, of Union Springs.

Attorney General Strange's Office presented evidence to a Bullock County grand jury, resulting in the indictments\* on May 18. Specifically, the indictments charge each commissioner with one count of intentionally, knowingly or recklessly spending an amount greater than \$15,000 for inmate food at the Bullock County Jail without entering into free and open competitive sealed bids, in violation of Code of Alabama, Section 41-16-50. Additionally, the chairman, Smith, is charged with failure, as the head of a governmental agency, to report a possible ethics law violation.

The matter was referred to the Attorney General's Office by the Alabama Examiners of Public Accounts. An audit covering the time period of October 2008 to September 2009 included a finding by the Examiners that "The Code of Alabama 1975, Section 41-16-50, states that all expenditure of funds of whatever nature for labor, services, work, or for the purchase of materials, equipment, supplies, or other personal property involving \$15,000.00 or more should be subject to the Alabama Competitive Bid Law. The Commission paid at least \$61,000.00 for supplies and \$24,000.00 for food for the Jail without letting bids as required by the Alabama Competitive Bid Law." The Examiners had previously issued reports of audits for the years October 2006 to September 2007 and October 2007 to September 2008, the two years prior to the audit under investigation, which also reported that the Commission had paid in excess of \$15,000 for food for the jail without letting bids as required by Section 41-16-50.



No further information about the investigation or about the defendants' alleged crimes other than that stated in the indictments may be released at this time.

If convicted, each of the commissioners faces a penalty of up to ten years imprisonment and a fine of up to \$15,000 for the bid law charges, which are class C felonies. Smith additionally faces a penalty of up to 12 months imprisonment and a fine of up to \$6,000 for the ethics violation, which is a class A misdemeanor. Furthermore, Section 36-9-2 of the Code of Alabama states that when an officeholder is convicted of a felony, the office is vacated from the time of conviction.

*\*An indictment is merely an accusation. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.*