

THE RIPP REPORT
22985 Highridge Road - Fairhope, Alabama 36532
334-669-0497

July 22,2024

Mr. Mason Bass
Office of the Governor
Director of Appointments

Dear Mr. Bass:

My name is Francis Paul Ripp. I am the founder of The Ripp Report, a not-for-profit consumer organization operating in Baldwin County, in Fairhope, for the last 20 years. The Ripp Report focuses on political corruption, as well as common consumer issues.

The Baldwin County Sheriff Office has been the subject of many complaints. As you are aware, Sheriff Huey "Hoss" Mack has now resigned, mid-term, and is now looking to appoint Anthony Lowery, currently his second-in-command. Many citizens welcome Mack's departure, and question his reason for leaving mid-term.

The Sheriff's Department now has a Major Crimes Unit, which was formed by "Hoss" Mack. It is composed of police officers within Baldwin County, who have been tasked with investigating loss-of-life incidents involving Baldwin County Police. Yet, this would appear to possibly have a hidden agenda – to prevent outside police organizations from investigating BCSO incidents. So far, nine unarmed people have lost their lives at the hands of BCSO – all of which were supposedly "justified" by the Major Crimes Unit. Four were killed on I-10 when a deputy chased a vehicle at 110 mph the wrong way down the Interstate. Three burned-to-death, and two others died of injuries as a result of the accident. Sheriff Mack's response was simply, "They should not have run from police."

Then there is the Jonathan Victor case, currently in Federal Court. Victor was shot 4 times with an assault rifle by Baldwin County Sheriff's Office at a distance of 7 yards. He was unarmed, holding only a fanny pack. Sheriff Mack, and District Attorney Robert Wilters (formerly "Judge" Wilters, see more below) told media that Victor had ketamine in his system. He omitted the fact that the emergency medics administered the drug in the course of trying to save Victor's life.

Currently, the BCSO is in turmoil with a federal lawsuit involving missing federal evidence, plus internal investigations of senior officers alleged to having had various sexual affairs with subordinates. The fact is that is Captain Andre Reid was Hoss Mack's first choice, and Andre was part of the sex-scandal. The most recent allegations against Andre finally forced Mack to go for his second choice, Anthony Lowery, as successor.

This is just scratching the surface of the mayhem at BCSO. Suffice it to say that the widespread allegations go deep, and an independent investigation would reveal much more.

The morale of the department is so low that long-term residents of Baldwin County profess to having zero confidence in BCSO. Anthony Lowery is an office administrator, who was hired by Mack, shortly after he became Sheriff. Lowery has little-to-no field experience, and has supported Sheriff Mack 100% of the time – like an automaton – regardless of the severity of the issue. Mack is a crafty politician, and an appalling cop. Unfortunately, BCSO is the model of a tightly-knit, good-ole-boy network-of-corruption that maintains control of every aspect of the County's operations and politics. So there are multiple reasons for not appointing Anthony Lowery. The most compelling is his history of compliance with departmental cover-ups. The last thing Baldwin Country needs is to duplicate Mack with a twin.

The single stand-alone reason that Anthony Lowery should be passed over for the position of Sheriff is his participation in the wrongful conviction of Murray “Bubba” Lawrence in 2004. Lowery was one of the “investigators” in the same case as Mack and Judge Robert Wilters. The Ripp Report has worked on this particular wrongful conviction for almost 5 years now. (Please see included article, “Digging Deep” from Lagniappe.) The Maxwell-Tillman Law Firm in Birmingham has now been representing Mr. Lawrence for almost a year, and has already championed several legal hurdles. The case is now before the Court of Criminal Appeals, as we continue to seek justice.

You may be familiar with the biographical legal drama on Netflix, entitled “Just Mercy.” Mr. Lawrence's case is just as egregious. Familiarity with the court transcript provides that (then) Lieutenant Mack, Prosecutor Whetstone, and Judge Wilters, all willfully and knowingly withheld exculpatory evidence from the defense. Their signatures are on the exhumation document – permission to disinter the body of Brandon Hastings – with the gruesome motive of manipulating evidence. In the “Digging Deep” article, all three admit to having full knowledge of this Brady violation.

Why is this case important in the potential replacement of Mack with Lowery? Because when Mr. Lawrence is released, or given a fair trial, two things will happen: 1) There will be a documentary of the case, and International media attention, and 2) Sheriff Mack, Prosecutor David Whetstone and (former) Judge Robert Wilters (now D.A.) will be shown to have worked in concert to withhold evidence, having sent an innocent man to jail for 20 years. Lowery was an intrinsic player in that deception.

The Ripp Report has also had interviews with the FBI, and filed complaints with the Attorney General in reference to the BCSO. I have addressed the County Commission, as well having warned them of their liability, as pertaining to findings with the Major Crimes Unit.

Please see included Ripp Report, and a page to linked articles. I urge you to be sure to read the public comments –especially those written in June of this year. Ample exculpatory evidence was discovered, and even Cumberland Law School provided an early opinion.

My request is that the Office of Appointments assume responsibility to research the facts and allegations involving Lowery. This could be a big opportunity to clean up the Sheriff's Office with new leadership. Lowery is a carbon copy of Mack. Please consider other choices, or the holding of a special election. It would be in the best interests of the State of Alabama to avoid as much embarrassment as possible.

Sincerely

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