

# Fast Look Around the Paddock

*It's never too early to launch a run for the top job in state government...but especially when times are tough and the smart money goes quick on the surest bets.*

BY CARY ESTES AND DAVID THORNELL • PHOTOS BY STEVE GATES

## Bradley Byrne

Early polling shows Bradley Byrne among the front runners of the Republican primary and doing well in head-to-head match-ups with Democratic contenders Artur Davis and Ron Sparks.

In regards to other Republican candidates, in recent polling, Byrne and Tim James remained slightly behind Roy Moore. Prior to campaign funding disclosure, political observers are guessing Byrne is commanding the lead among business interests, although James' campaign seems please with his success in raising funds.

Byrne entered the race with momentum from his brief but high profile stint, 2007 to 2009, as chancellor of the state's two-year college system. His appointment came after an investigation of corruption in

the two-year college system resulted in the successful prosecution of a number of public officials, including the former department chancellor.

Byrne was picked for the chancellor job by Gov. Bob Riley, president of the appointing Alabama State Board of Education. Riley has made no formal endorsement, but it's an open secret the governor is a Byrne booster.

As chancellor, Byrne butted heads with the Alabama Education Association by instituting a policy against two-year college system employees serving in the Legislature, "double dipping." He kicked off his campaign with an attack on the AEA and a call for "sweeping tenure reform" for teachers, state law allowing charter schools in Alabama and changes in the education budgeting process.

In September, Byrne picked up the endorsement of Great Southern



**Bradley Byrne came out swinging against the Alabama Education Association.**

Wood Preserving Inc. President and CEO Jimmy Rane, well known for his television commercials as the "Yella Fella."

Byrne was born and raised in Mobile and now lives in nearby Fairhope, in Baldwin County. He was a member of the Alabama State Board of Education from 1994 through 2002. From 2002 to 2007 he served in the state Senate, representing District 32, Baldwin County.



**Artur Davis has cultivated a moderate stance on issues like health care reform.**

prone to follow party lines."

Along the later lines, Davis — who is looking to become Alabama's first black governor — voted, in November, against the House version of the health care reform bill. Jesse Jackson remarked, "You can't vote against health care and call yourself a black man." Alabama black leader Joe Reed also

attacked Davis on his vote.

Political observers say the Jackson and Reed criticism can only help Davis among Alabama's

majority conservative, white voters. Democratic opponent Ron Sparks broadcast the criticism among black voters, who make up a decisive segment of Alabama's Democratic voters and account for Davis' double-digit lead over Sparks.

Davis graduated with honors from Harvard College and Harvard Law School, as did America's first black president. Davis backed Obama early in the 2007 Democratic presidential primary, while Reed and other Alabama Democrats backed Hillary Clinton.

Davis was an intern with U.S. Senator Howell Heflin and a clerk with U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson. In 1994, he was named

## Artur Davis

Artur Davis describes himself as "a bookish kid, painfully shy, not terribly social" and now — as a four-term U.S. Congressman — "not

## Kay Ivey

She's a female candidate for governor who used to compete in barrel-racing events at rodeos, is a staunch conservative, can shoot a rifle and has a dog named Bear. And her name is not Sarah Palin.

Kay Ivey has several things in common with the former Alaska governor and vice-presidential candidate, not the least of which is her embrace of new media. In addition to using Facebook and Twitter to communicate with supporters, Ivey held a statewide telephone town hall forum on Dec. 2 that drew more than 8,500 callers.

Unlike Palin, Ivey is not a lightning rod for publicity, and is probably happy to trade for the modest name recognition that comes with statewide office. Ivey has been the Alabama State Treasurer since 2002, the first Republican in that office.

Recognition she would like to give up is her identification with the Prepaid Affordable College Tuition (PACT) program, a fund administered by the Treasury Department that plunged with Wall Street in 2008, shrinking the tuition savings of parents across the state.

Ivey's banner issues are cutting wasteful spending and economic development that focuses on small and mid-sized companies. Ivey also supports charter schools legislation.

Former Massachusetts's governor and 2008 Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney has endorsed Ivey, who has invested \$1 million of her personal assets into the campaign.

Early polls show Ivey running behind Bradley Byrne and Roy Moore in the Republican primary, though a survey from Washington pollster Kellyanne



**Kay Ivey has pumped \$1 million of her own money into her campaign.**

Conway indicated that Ivey's favorability rating among voters is five times higher than her unfavorable rating.

## Tim James

Those who know him best claim that he never meets a stranger, is an excellent storyteller and has a great head for business. Tim James also has the same hunger that his dad had two opportunities to satisfy, which is to serve the people of Alabama from its

assistant U.S. Attorney for Alabama's Middle District. Davis opened his own law office in Birmingham in 1998 and also became a popular commentator on legal issues for a local television station.

In 2000, Davis ran unsuccessfully against incumbent Earl Hilliard for the House seat representing the 7th Congressional District. He won that seat in a rematch in 2002.

Davis says he is "the only candidate genuinely committed to reform, including constitutional reform, ethics reform or economic reform."

highest executive office as a first foray into public service.

Tim James made his first run for governor in 2002 and finished third in the Republican primary. This time he started very early, in May 2008. When other candidates were still laying low in September this year, James had been keeping up a frantic schedule for months, speaking all around the state and designating campaign coordinators in over 90 percent of Alabama's counties.

James graduated from Auburn University with a degree in finance in 1985. Now 47, he has been involved in several development ventures, the best-known being the Foley Beach Express. Gov. Fob James signed into law facilitating legislation that allowed counties to license toll roads shortly before the project was an-

nounced. The partners, including two of Tim James' brothers, sold the Express to an Australian company for \$95 million in 2005.

An avid outdoorsman and hunter, James touts his "common sense solutions" to Alabama's most pressing problems — an approach that twice worked for Fob James. Expanding on that platform in December, Tim James said one of his first acts as governor would be to prepare for the next wave of military base closings in 2015.



**Tim James began campaigning actively well in advance of all other candidates.**

James, who grew up in Opelika, has been married to Angela Whittle James for 25 years. The couple has three adult children and reside in downtown Greenville, also spending time on their 5,000-acre timber farm in Crenshaw County.



**Bill Johnson has made headlines with attacks on Gov. Bob Riley.**

Bob Riley.

Riley appointed Johnson director of the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs in Nov. 2005, then pressed him to give up that post when Johnson made it clear he planned to run for governor.

Johnson, in November, accused Riley of taking campaign money from the gaming industry in Mississippi, to block the spread of gambling in Alabama. Johnson, who worked on Riley's campaign for governor in 2002, claims a fellow campaign insider told him Riley got \$3 million in campaign contributions from representatives of Indian bingo parlors in Mississippi — an accusation Riley denies.

Some political observers speculate Johnson is acting as a

spoiler against Bradley Byrne, who enjoys the tacit support of Riley. Johnson says he's just out "to do the right thing and stand up for what I believe in, which is honesty in government."

Johnson is the son of an Army officer who bivouacked in Birmingham in 1973 when Johnson was in junior high school. Johnson graduated from Spring Hill College, in Mobile, with a degree in chemistry. He's a member of Mensa International, which admits members showing I.Q. scores in the top 2 percent.

Johnson owned a construction company in Birmingham and served on the Birmingham City Council from 1997 to 2001. Riley appointed him assistant director of ADECA in 2003, then director in 2005.

Johnson's wife, Kathy, is the director of the Alabama Broadband Initiative. Riley appointed her to that post in 2008.

## Bill Johnson

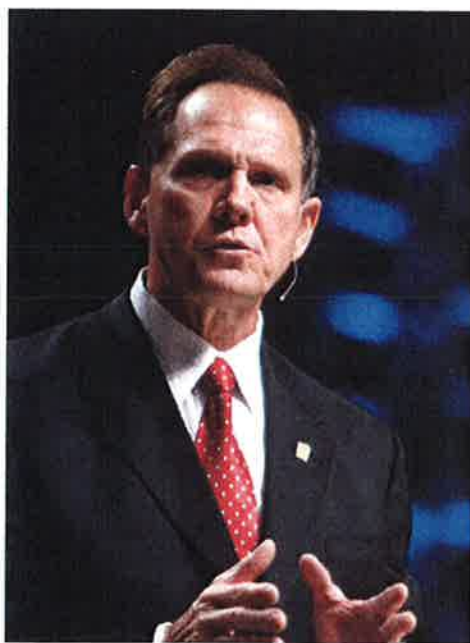
Republican candidate Bill Johnson — lagging, along with Kay Ivey, behind the Republican front runners Bradley Byrne, Tim James and Roy Moore — has tried to gain strides with headline attacks on Gov.

## Roy Moore

Roy Moore likes to campaign as a man of the people. He also apparently is a man of the animals. When asked to supply some personal background material about Moore, his campaign replied that he is married with four children and two grandchildren, and then added, "five horses, four dogs, six ducks, four donkeys and 25 cows."

The number most often associated with Moore is 10, as in the former Ten Commandments monument he once famously had placed in the state Supreme Court building.

Moore's crusade gives him the greatest name recognition and a slight lead in the early polling. Detractors wonder whether that lead will hold as Byrne and James start spending the big bucks on TV and radio.



**Roy Moore has the greatest name recognition and a slim lead in early polls.**

Branching out beyond the Decalogue, Moore says he also wants to create new jobs for the

state and reduce taxes on existing business, toughen the merit pay system for teachers, restrict the relationship between lobbyists and legislators, and ensure that illegal aliens are not allowed to work or vote in Alabama.

Moore has not abandoned his core moral messages, particularly his stands against gay marriage, abortion and gambling. That part of his campaign has won Moore the endorsement of numerous conservative organizations, both in Alabama and nationally, as well as a nod from actor Chuck Norris.

Moore is working to get his message to the public through both old media devices (television, radio, phone calls) and the new media avenues of Twitter, Facebook and email blasts.

In 2006, Moore lost the Republican primary to incumbent Bob Riley by a 2-to-1 margin.



**Ron Sparks jumped on Artur Davis' health care vote to undermine Davis' black support.**

## Ron Sparks

You could say that Democratic candidate Ron Sparks has worked his way up from the ground. His first job was in a DeKalb County sock mill. The Fort Payne native was elected Alabama's Commissioner of Agriculture and Industries in 2003.

Spark's top campaign issue rips a page from Don Siegelman's

successful 1998 governor campaign — calling for a state lottery to support college scholarships for Alabama students. Sparks also promises as governor an economic stimulus plan — \$400 million in state spending on construction and repair of roads and bridges.

He also promises to remove the state tax on groceries and to back policies that support alternative fuels.

Sparks faces an uphill battle in his Democratic primary campaign against Artur Davis. An early poll conducted by Capital Survey Research Center showed Davis with a 30-point lead in the primary, though Sparks did match up well with several Republican


candidates in a general-election survey conducted by Public Policy Polling.

Sparks has received endorsements from former Birmingham Mayor Richard Arrington, Jerome Gray (the state political director for President Obama) and 28 Alabama sheriffs.

The campaign is using what Sparks' officials refer to as a "heavy infusion of new media components," including Facebook, Twitter, blogs, email blasts and an interactive Web site.

The father of three children, Sparks has been active in the Fort Payne community over the years, working with the Jaycees, Kiwanis Club, American Legion and PTA. He served on the Secretary of State's Task Force to reform election laws and the Lt. Governor's Task Force on violence in schools.

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