

## NEWS RELEASE

# Luther Strange

Alabama Attorney General



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## AG ANNOUNCES CONVICTION OF FORMER AUTAUGA COUNTY OFFICIAL

(MONTGOMERY)--Attorney General Luther Strange today announced the conviction of a former chairman of the Autauga County Commission for crimes he committed related to additional positions he also formerly held as chief of the Autaugaville Volunteer Fire Department and head of the Autaugaville Water Works. Danny Chavers, of Prattville, pleaded guilty this morning in Autauga County Circuit Court to five felony charges, two for violations of the state ethics law and three for first-degree theft.

Sentencing is set for May 14. The ethics violations and first-degree theft charges are class B felonies, punishable by two to 20 years imprisonment and fines of up to \$30,000.00 for each count.

"These are serious crimes involving extensive betrayal of the public trust and theft of taxpayers' money," said Attorney General Strange. "I am pleased that this defendant stands convicted for these violations, but I hope that he will meet with a punishment fitting of what he has done. At the time of sentencing, we will seek jail time as well as restitution."

Related charges still are pending against Ernest Terry Stoudemire of Autaugaville also former chief of the Autaugaville VFD; and Mack Cell Harmon of Autaugaville, is a former assistant chief of the Autaugaville VFD. Attorney General Strange's Special Prosecutions Division presented evidence to an Autauga County grand jury on November 5, 2013, resulting in indictments\* against the three.

Chavers was convicted for illegal activities related to his positions with the Autaugaville VFD and Water Works. Specifically, Chavers pleaded guilty to three counts of first-degree theft, from the Autauga County Commission, the Autaugaville Volunteer Fire Department, and the State of Alabama; and two counts of ethics violation, by using his official positions as chief of the Autaugaville Volunteer Fire Department and head of Autaugaville Water Works for unlawful personal gain.

Chavers' crimes were described by the prosecution in court today as follows: As chief of the Autaugaville VFD, Chavers used his office to obtain personal gain for himself by using money in the VFD account for personal purchases such as merchandise from Victoria's Secret, restaurants and hotels in Florida, gas stations, online gambling and a casino in Mississippi, in the amount of more than \$240,000. Regarding the theft from the State of Alabama, Chavers falsified documentation in order to obtain a \$4800 grant, placed these grant funds in the VFD account, and continued to make personal purchases with this money. Also, Chavers used his position as head of the Autaugaville Water Works to obtain two checks totaling \$49,000 from the Autauga County Commission, which was supposed to



go to the town of Autaugaville but which Chavers instead placed in the VFD fund and continued to use for personal purchases.

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

Attorney General Strange commended Assistant Attorney General Bill Lisenby and Special Agents of his Special Prosecutions Division for their outstanding work in these cases.

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