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Alabama Attorney General Marshall: Tackling Violent Crime Backlogs Will Make Alabama Safer with New Speedy Trial Act

(Montgomery, Ala) – Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall today applauded the introduction of Senate Bill 176 and House Bill 307, also known as the Speedy Trial Act, legislation aimed at expediting trials for violent criminal cases, reducing court backlogs, and ensuring swift justice for victims. This crucial reform will be sponsored by Senator Will Barfoot (R-Pike Road), Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and Representative Jim Hill (R-Moody), Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee. The measure is a decisive step toward enhancing public safety, respecting victims of crime, securing witnesses, and ultimately, ensuring that justice is served in an efficient manner.

“Speedy trials are a constitutional guarantee for a defendant,” said Attorney General Marshall, “but no one deserves swift justice more than a crime victim. When violent criminals remain in our communities due to prolonged trial delays, the risk of reoffending rises. And the longer a criminal case sits, the assurance of justice steadily diminishes. Senate Bill 176 and House Bill 307, the Speedy Trial Act, offer a simple solution to a distinct problem.”

“We appreciate the Attorney General taking positive steps to help us address the criminal case backlog,” said Chief Justice Sarah Stewart. “We have been collaborating with our presiding judges, law enforcement, district attorneys, and public defenders’ offices to coordinate getting these cases ready for trial. Keeping Alabama families safe in their homes and businesses is the primary initiative of our administration.”

Background on the Legislation:

- **Prioritizing Violent Crime Cases** – By expediting trials, this legislation ensures that dangerous offenders do not walk free as the result of judicial backlogs, reducing the risk of reoffending.
- **Protecting Victims and Witnesses** – Long delays force victims and witnesses to live in fear while memories fade and evidence deteriorates. The Act ensures that their testimonies remain fresh and that they receive justice in a timely manner.
- **Reducing Court Backlogs** – Some Alabama courts face overwhelming caseloads, particularly in violent crime cases. The Act empowers the Chief Justice to assign visiting judges at the request of a district attorney or the Attorney General, with requests processed within 30 days to swiftly address case congestion.
- **Strengthening Public Trust** – Delayed justice erodes confidence in the criminal justice system. By guaranteeing timely trials, Senate Bill 176 and House Bill 307 reassures Alabama’s communities that the system is working to protect them.

While Alabama law currently allows the state Supreme Court to appoint special judges, there is no dedicated mechanism to request additional judicial resources specifically to address



backlogs in violent crime cases. Senate Bill 176 and House Bill 307 fill this gap efficiently and cost-effectively.

The Act also establishes the Speedy Trial Fund, ensuring financial resources are available to cover special judges, court reporters, and additional juries – preventing logistical delays and ensuring trials move forward without hindrance.

“This legislation is about more than speed – it’s about justice, fairness, and ensuring our courts serve the people effectively,” said Marshall. “By holding violent offenders accountable without needless delays, we send a clear message: Alabama takes public safety seriously.”

Sponsored by Senator Will Barfoot (R-Pike Road) and Representative Jim Hill (R-Moody), Senate Bill 176 and House Bill 307 represent a bold step toward a safer, more efficient Alabama – where victims receive the justice they deserve, and violent criminals are swiftly held accountable.