

FOUR DEMOCRAT HOUSE MEMBERS ANNOUNCE SWITCH TO ALABAMA REPUBLICAN PARTY

Montgomery – Alabama House Republican Caucus Chairman and Speaker-designate Mike Hubbard (R – Auburn) on Monday announced that four sitting House members – Steve Hurst of Munford, Lesley Vance of Phenix City, Alan Boothe of Troy and Mike Millican of Hamilton – have decided to drop their affiliation with the Democrat Party and switch their allegiances to the ALGOP.

“After speaking with each of these fine legislators in-depth, I know that their decisions come after much thought, deep deliberation and soul searching,” said Hubbard, who also serves as chairman of the Alabama Republican Party. “The Alabama Republican Party grew from holding meetings in a phone booth to the dominant majority it is today largely with the help of Democrat party switchers, and the House Republican Caucus is happy to welcome our colleagues into the fold.”

Hubbard noted that the announcement continues the explosion in the number of Republican lawmakers in the State House. Prior to the November 2, 2010 general election, only 44 Republicans served in the Alabama House with the number rising to 62 on Election Night and increasing to 66 with today’s announcement.

Millican, who was elected in 1990 and is the longest-serving of the group, said his decision was based upon the fact that his beliefs are now more in tune with the core conservative philosophy of the Republican Party.

“I have many friends in the Democratic Party and will always appreciate them, but I feel strongly that the Republican Party represents the conservative values and fiscal restraint that I and many of my neighbors believe in,” Millican said. “I would like to ask for your prayers and support as I continue working to serve all of the citizens of my district – whether they are Democrat, Republican or Independent – to the best of my ability.”

Boothe, who was elected in 1998 and has not drawn ballot opposition since, said his decision was inspired by the election of Dr. Robert Bentley as governor and by the conservative foundation upon which the ALGOP was built.

“I have worked closely with Dr. Bentley in the House over the last several years, and I think he will be a great leader for Alabama, especially in these difficult times,” Boothe said. “I want to work with Dr. Bentley to pass his conservative agenda rather than against him as part of the ‘loyal opposition’ in the Democrat Party. First and foremost, I am a conservative at heart, and, at this time, the Republican Party best reflects my conservative beliefs.”

Having served as chairman of the House Banking and Insurance Committee for the past eight years, Vance, who was elected in 1994, said changing parties at this time leaves him in the best position to continue serving the needs of the citizens of his district.

“I am happy to join my friends in The Republican Party. I have always been a conservative, fighting for the principles of fiscal responsibility, ethics reform and bringing jobs to Alabama. I believe this decision puts me in the best position to deliver on all of these things,” Vance said. “I look forward to representing the people of my district, and working with Speaker-elect Hubbard, who is the first Speaker of the House from our area, and accomplishing great things for East Alabama over the next four years.”

Hurst, who was originally elected in 1998 and represents Calhoun and Talladega County, said he has contemplated a party switch for some time and was convinced by his long-time friend, Alabama Third District Congressman Mike Rogers, that the best time was the present.

“I considered qualifying to run this cycle as a Republican, but I qualified as a Democrat in hopes that the party would begin to tack back to the right,” Hurst said. “It has become quickly obvious that the Republicans best reflect the conservative principles that I and my constituents share, and my good friend, Congressman Rogers, has helped assure me that is the case.”

All four lawmakers could begin caucusing with Republicans as early as next month should Gov. Bob Riley decide to call a special session to address ethics reform legislation.

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