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Attorney general

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Incumbent Troy King, appointed by Gov. Bob Riley in March 2004, has been a disappointment. King has had his good moments, such as pushing for stronger sex-offender laws, truth-in-sentencing legislation and a new state open-meetings law.

But even when he's right, he can look like he's showboating for political gain. Case in point: His ankle bracelet stunt last year. King was outfitted with an electronic monitoring device after proposing a tougher law to monitor sex offenders, vowing to wear it until his bill became law.

Some gambling opponents also have accused King of, wittingly or unwittingly, helping gambling magnate Milton McGregor bring sweepstakes machines to Jefferson County.

As an incumbent, King will be tough to beat in the Republican primary. But we prefer Mark Montiel, a Montgomery lawyer who has upset the business-as-usual apple cart.

Montiel, a former judge on the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals, sued to end the Legislature's "pork" spending system. He also sued to reverse lousy attorney general opinions that have fueled massive money laundering through political action committees - more than \$100,000 of which went to King this election.

We like Montiel's fighting spirit and legal background, which includes a stint in the attorney general's office prosecuting white-collar crime. Republicans should nominate him.

In the Democratic primary, let's assume Larry Darby, founder of the Atheist Law Center, will vote for himself. If he gets another vote, that's one vote too many. Darby, who made headlines this month by denying the Holocaust happened, is an embarrassment to the ticket.

There is only one choice for voters, and that is John Tyson Jr. He served on the state Board of Education for 14 years, the last nine as its presiding officer. Since 1994, he has been Mobile County district attorney.

Tyson is Democrats' best bet.

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