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EDITORIALS

In AG race, Tyson has right idea

08-30-2006

The race for Alabama attorney general is shaping up to be a heated battle with two vastly different philosophies.

Incumbent Attorney General Troy King, appointed to the post when Bill Pryor made it to a federal judgeship, faces veteran prosecutor John Tyson, who serves as district attorney of Mobile County.

They are deeply divided on just how this state ought to handle the criminal element. King, who has much less experience in prosecutions, says the state ought to be tough on crime. Tyson, a seasoned district attorney, says the key is in alternatives like education.

After seeing what Alabama has done in the corrections arena in the past few decades – filling prisons to the brim until all the space is gone – we would have to side with Tyson on this one.

Tyson says to turn young lives around before they reach the prison door. He favors intervening at the school door, aiming his sights toward at risk behavior, like poor school attendance, and letting a multi-disciplinary team help turn them away from a life of crime.

It's the same kind of program he already has in play in Mobile County that has shown signs of success.

Yet King wants to dismiss it all as nothing more than a “social laboratory,” according to an Associated Press report. Tyson points to overflowing prisons to underscore the notion that it is “better to stop the crime from happening in the first place.”

Certainly, the state should be tough on crime, but there ought to be alternatives and early intervention.

History has proven it time and time again. It's easier to turn a life around before it reaches years of heading down the wrong path.

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Tyson recognizes that and is putting the concept into action. As attorney general in this state and seeing the results of not recognizing the logic in it, King ought to know better.

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