

The Gadsden Times

This copy is for your personal, noncommercial use only. You can order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers [here](#) or use the "Reprints" tool that appears above any article. [Order a reprint of this article now.](#)

DANA BEYERLE: Baugh touts Alabama's Olmstead compliance

By [Dana Beyerle](#)

Times Montgomery Bureau

Published: Monday, June 25, 2012 at 6:01 a.m.

Alabama Mental Health Commissioner Zelia Baugh testified last week before a U.S. Senate committee last week about the state's reaction to a U.S. Supreme Court ruling that upheld community treatment for the mentally ill.

Baugh was invited to testify before the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions on the effect of the Supreme Court's 1999 Olmstead ruling, which said the mentally ill have a right to the least restrictive care.

The committee wanted to hear about the community integration of the mentally ill under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

"We have had success in Alabama," Baugh testified. "The state has complied with Olmstead without a lot of issues."

Baugh said Alabama is the first state in the South to close all its developmentally disabled hospitals. She also said the state is closing two mental illness hospitals and transferring patients to community settings during a time of budget cuts brought on partly by the recession.

"I believe states can make significant progress complying with Olmstead without large sums of money," she said.

Also testifying were Assistant Attorney General Thomas Perez, Rita Landgraf, secretary of the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, and consumer Ricardo Thornton of Washington, D.C.

REQUESTS DENIED

Well, legislators can look at their out-of-state travel ban in this way — they won't get blindsided by student photojournalists for playing golf at a legislative function like they did several years ago. House Speaker Mike Hubbard and Lt. Gov. Kay Ivey told legislators they won't approve travel requests for the rest of the fiscal year because of budget reductions.

POLL RESULTS

The polling arm of the Alabama Education Association recently asked Alabama residents how they feel about issues and people.

The survey of 562 likely voters was conducted May 21-23 and June 4-6 by the Capital Survey Research Center, and had an error factor of plus or minus 4.2 percent.

Gov. Robert Bentley had 98 percent recognition, a 63 percent favorable rating and a job satisfaction rating of 71 percent.

"The major reasons voters are dissatisfied with the governor are disagreement with policies and decisions, not doing what he said he would do, and attacks on public schools," the survey said.

It did not identify "attacks."

Has Your Bank
Outgrown You?
Maybe It's Time to
Outgrow Your Bank.

Remote Deposit Capture
ACH Origination Capability
Online Banking
Merchant Services

Big Bank Features,
Small Bank Service

Learn More

Generations
Bank

FDIC

In addition, 53 percent said they were satisfied with how things are going in the state, the survey said.

With the margin of error, the satisfaction factor could be below 50 percent or as high as 57.2 percent.

“The major reasons voters are dissatisfied are the economy and jobs, public schools hurt and party politics,” the survey said.

It said 56 percent of likely voters are satisfied with the job the Legislature is doing, but this number could be higher or lower with the accuracy factor figured in.

“The major reasons voters are dissatisfied are they are not doing what they are supposed to be doing, hurting schools and attention paid to parties and not the people,” the survey said.

NO REHEARING

The state Ethics Commission declined to rehear the case of Public Service Commission Energy Division Director Janice Hamilton over her use of a state-supplied cellphone to run her travel service.

The commission in April asked Attorney General Luther Strange to review Hamilton's case. She asked the commission to reconsider, but the commission voted 5-0 on June 6 not to rehear the case.

State examiners in an audit for 2009 and 2010 said Hamilton had used up her allotted minutes on her state cellphone to run a travel service. She reimbursed the state \$939 and was suspended six weeks without pay, a substantial penalty since she makes about \$110,000 a year.

The attorney general's office last week said it has 180 days to inform the Ethics Commission whether it intends to take various forms of action or close the case.

Hamilton's attorney, Susan James, reacted. “I hope whoever looks at it sees there was no malicious or criminal intent on her part,” James said.