

DAILY REPORT

A SMART READ FOR SMART READERS

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2017
TWO SECTIONS | \$2.00



AFTERHOURS

Lynn Roberson (left), Sally Akins and others at Georgia Defense Lawyers' events. p. 6
Lawyers suggest questions for Gorsuch hearings. p. 5

An ALM Publication

Newsreel

Second Contractor Pleads to Bribing City

• A second city contractor is cooperating with a federal investigation into allegations of bribery at Atlanta City Hall after he pleaded guilty to a single conspiracy count Thursday. Federal charging documents for contractor Charles P. Richards Jr., owner of C.P. Richards Construction Co. and C.P. Richards & Associates, and city contractor Elvin R. Mitchell Jr.—who pleaded guilty to a single bribery conspiracy count last month—have not revealed to whom the bribes were paid and for whom they were intended.

Richards pleaded guilty to criminal information accusing him of conspiring with Mitchell in what federal prosecutors have called a pay-to-play scheme. Richards paid at least \$185,000 in bribes to an unidentified individual to secure city contracts, according to the criminal information (a federal charge issued in lieu of an indictment). Richards did so believing that some portion of the money would be paid to city officials who could influence the city contracting and procurement process. In return, from 2010 to 2015, Richards and Mitchell and their companies received contracts with City Hall, according to the criminal information.

On Thursday, Richards' counsel, Decatur attorney Lynne Borsuk, said Richards "was trying to keep his company afloat during the Great Recession. He acted wrongfully when city contracts were improperly solicited. He is deeply remorseful for that conduct." Borsuk said that, when investigating authorities approached Richards, "He cooperated with them immediately and fully. He will continue to cooperate with authorities."

She would not comment on whether Richards paid the bribes because he believed it was the only way to secure city contracts or to whom he had paid the monies or for whom they may have been intended. Richards pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Steve Jones. Mitchell is represented by Atlanta attorney Craig Gillen.

—R. Robin McDonald



ZACH PORTER

Recently designated Fulton County State Court Chief Judge Diane E. Bessen, who once "didn't even want to be a lawyer," says she loves being a judge.

Amid Fulton Court Updates, Bessen Takes the Helm as State Court Chief Judge

GREG LAND | gland@alm.com

IN HER EARLY DAYS as a private attorney and part-time Fulton County magistrate, Diane Bessen occasionally had to attend what were then all-day motion calendars in the Fulton County State Court.

At the time, she recalls thinking that anyone who would consider becoming a full-time judge should have their head examined.

That was then. Now, after 15 years on the bench and newly designated as the chief judge of the Fulton County State Court, Bessen can't imagine a legal role she'd rather have.

"I love my job," Bessen said. "There are still days when I park my car downstairs and walk to the elevator, and I'm smiling because I get to do this every day."

See **BESSEN**, page 2

5 Music Companies Sue Atlanta's Spinrilla, Seek \$3.2B for Alleged Copyright Violations

R. ROBIN MCDONALD
rmcdonald@alm.com

SPINRILLA PROMOTES itself on Twitter as "the 800-pound gorilla of free hip-hop mixtapes." But the Atlanta-based company may have met its match.

Five of the nation's largest recording companies with extensive hip-hop catalogues are suing Spinrilla and founder Jeffery Dylan Copeland in federal

court in Atlanta, claiming that Spinrilla's website and free mobile apps have siphoned off hundreds of thousands of potential paying customers by making copyrighted music available for free.

The suit claims that more than 21,000 individual recordings of copyrighted material—in addition to copyrighted album cover art—have been downloaded, including musical works by stars such as Beyonce, Kanye West,

See **SPINRILLA**, page 4

King & Spalding Passes Big Firm Milestone — 1,000 Lawyers

MEREDITH HOBBS | mhobbs@alm.com

KING & SPALDING'S lawyer head count has surpassed 1,000 lawyers, another milestone for the Atlanta-based firm, while revenue edged up and profit per partner slipped modestly amid an influx of new equity partners last year.

Revenue increased 3.8 percent to \$1.06 billion in 2016, after the firm broke the \$1 billion revenue mark the prior year.

Net income increased 8.2 percent to \$484 million.

Atlanta's largest firm by head count and revenue, King & Spalding reported 1,005 lawyers for 2016, a net increase of 69 lawyers.

The head count increase and a record expansion in the firm's equity partner ranks pushed down revenue per lawyer by 3.7 percent to \$1.05 million, and profits per partner declined 1.8 percent to \$2.47 million.

The firm increased its equity partner ranks by a net of 18 partners for a total of 196 equity partners in 2016—after a net gain of only eight equity partners over the prior three years.

See **K&S**, page 3



"We were pleased with the growth. We are trying to do that for the right people in the right markets and the right practices," said King & Spalding chairman Robert Hays.



After Hours

● Spotlights lawyers' lives outside their offices

PHOTOS BY JOHN DISNEY/ALM

Civil Defense Bar Holds 14th Annual Judicial Reception

The Georgia Defense Lawyers Association held its 14th annual judicial reception on Feb. 2 at the State Bar of Georgia headquarters with more than 175 judges and lawyers in attendance. The statewide civil defense bar association has held similar events in Augusta and Savannah. The association's past presidents were honored at a luncheon on Feb. 3 at Capital City Club with 18 of them in attendance. (All photos are identified from left to right.)



Peter Muller, Judge Leigh May and Judge Mark Cohen



Lynn Roberson and Sally Akins



Jackie Smith, Matt Moffett and Candis Jones



Kim Jackson and Randy Kessler



Eric Ludwig, Judge Kelly Lee Ellerbe and Speer Mabry



Kirby Mason and Staten Bitting



Back Row: GDLA president Peter Muller with past presidents Mel Haas, Kirby Mason, Warner Fox, Al Parnell, Jerry Buchanan, David Whitworth, Pat Rice, Jimmy Singer and George Duncan. Front Row: Bo Chambers, Bruce Welch, Bubba Hughes, Salty Forbes, Bill Scrantom, Bob Travis, Walter McClelland, Staten Bitting and Wilbur Brooks



Lara Percifield and Judge Eric Dunaway



Judge Alvin Wong and C. Shane Keith



John McKinley, Bridgette Eckerson and Judge J.P. Boulee



Salty Forbes, Jimmy Singer and Bubba Hughes



Natalie Wilkes and Tawana Johnson



Philippa Ellis, Donovan Potter and Judge Belinda Evans



Judge Tilman Self and Lane Young