

Gray's actions reviewed in grand jury report; Document may be read on TIMES Web site

By Sally Maxwell, Managing Editor

The 10th Multicounty Grand Jury issued its final report Tuesday. The report confirmed the grand jury issued an indictment against current District Attorney Richard Gray of Wagoner.

Gray was defeated in his bid for re-election earlier this year, and December is his final month in office. The post will be taken over by Jerry Moore of Tahlequah, a former assistant district attorney, who resigned after Gray took office in 2002.

In the final report, the grand jury indicates that Gray was responsible for several incidents of misconduct on the part of his employees and himself.

The jury wrote that Gray was aware that an assistant district attorney, Janet Bickel, had taken methamphetamine from the scene of an investigation, but he did not call for an investigation.

The report reads, "The evidence turned in by Ms. Bickel was documented as having been turned in by 'a citizen.' From that point forward there was a concerted effort to coordinate 'cover-up' and/or 'responses to be offered in explanation' as to why the evidence came into Ms. Bickel's personal possession."

Bickel and Gray's office administrator, Artest Vyril Keeter, were both indicted earlier and pleaded guilty to perjury, in regard to their testimony before the grand jury. In addition, Bickel was also charged with and pleaded guilty to providing false evidence and possession of a controlled dangerous substance.

The grand jury later returned an indictment against Gray, charging him with embezzlement. The report reads, "The embezzlement charge against Mr. Gray, as well as the other charges returned by this grand jury...reflect a pattern of behavior which harbors corruption and a true departure from the pure intent of a District Attorney's Office."

The report continues, "...having...returned an indictment charging Mr. Gray with personally embezzling drug forfeiture monies, we clearly understand why Mr. Gray was in no position to correct or address employees under his watch for their criminal wrongdoing. We now know Mr. Gray created his own nest of deception and thievery. In that regard, we believe the charge of Embezzlement filed against Richard Gray is supported by overwhelming evidence including a great deal of testimony regarding seizure and forfeiture funds and how monies should be handled throughout the process. It was clear from the evidence presented to this grand jury and unrefuted by Mr. Gray that he lacks experience in handling forfeiture matters both in his prior experience in private practice and currently as a prosecutor. However, he seemed to learn enough about the system to manipulate it for his personal gain."

The complete grand jury report can be read on Your TIMES Web site at www.sequoyahcountytimes.com.

Gray said after he was indicted that he was not guilty and he will fight the embezzlement charge.