

Whose Idea was it to Ship a Galaxy Tab to Hank Bounds? *We Already Know*

An Editorial by Duane Cobb

By now, regular readers of USMNEWS.net are quite familiar with USM's Samsung Galaxy Tab scandal, or what *The Student Printz* is now calling **Tabletgate**. This scandal has already resulted in reputation hits to (former) USM provost Robert Lyman, chief information officer Homer Coffman, and procurement/contract services director Mike Herndon. These three men have each been placed on administrative leave by USM president Martha Saunders, although Lyman resigned his administrative position at USM just days before Tabletgate was born. In addition to the troubling claim that USM entered into a \$400,000+ contract *without* IHL Board approval – something that is required for public university contracts as large as \$250,000 – it is now public knowledge that USM sent one of the expensive Samsung devices to Hank Bounds, Mississippi's Higher Education Commissioner. As head of higher education in Mississippi, Bounds thought it appropriate to return the unused Galaxy Tab to USM, something his spokesperson claims happened earlier this fall.

The question many USM constituents now have is: who made the decision to send the Samsung tablet to Bounds? There is little to support the idea that Herndon would have ever come up with such an idea. It is also about as unlikely that Coffman would have either, leaving only Lyman from among “the on-leave three” to point a finger toward. Still, it's hard to imagine a scenario in which Lyman would have suggested that someone send Bounds a tablet. If he is ruled out, wouldn't that mean that the focus has to go squarely on Saunders? It would seem so. Why would Saunders do it? It's simple, really. Saunders and Bounds have a political relationship with one another, and he is higher up the political food chain than she is, meaning that *she* is in the position of seeking *his* favor. Providing a Samsung tablet would do just that, as would having him fly here and there in the USM Beechcraft King Air airplane. We know the latter occurs and has been occurring for some time, thanks largely to reports here at USMNEWS.net. It's no stretch at all to believe that the idea to ship a tablet to Bounds was Saunders' as well. As always, you are free to make up your own mind on this situation. Still, to refuse to come to grips with what is going on with this situation, and who is involved in it, is a bit like whistling against the wind. The question many now have is: who else did “USM” send tablets to?