# After justices decline Noe case, Resnick picks 5 replacements

COLUMBUS — Less than a week after five Ohio Supreme Court justices recused themselves from cases that involve prominent Republican fundraiser and rare-coin dealer Tom Noe, Justice Alice Robie Resnick yesterday assigned appeals court judges to take their seats.

The Blade, state Sen. Marc Dann, a Democrat from the Youngstown area, and the Columbus Dispatch have asked the chairman last year.

## Among those chosen are 3 Democrats

high court to order the state to release uncensored copies of the state's rare-coin inventory.

Five of the seven justices — all recipients of campaign cash from Mr. Noe — announced May 18 they would step aside.

One of the justices, Judith Ann Lanzinger of Toledo, said Mr. Noe had been her campaign

Because Chief Justice Thomas Moyer was among those who recused themselves, the assignment of the visiting judges went to Justice Resnick, a Democrat, as the justice with the second most seniority.

She assigned the following state appeals court judges to hear the three cases.

●Tom Bryant, a Findlay Re-

Moyer, a Republican.

- ●Tom Grady, a Springfield Democrat, to replace Republican Justice Evelyn Stratton.
- ●Bob Gorman, a Cincinnati Democrat, to replace Republican Justice Maureen O'Connor.
- Judge Diane Karpinski, a Cleveland Democrat, to replace Republican Justice Terrence O'Donnell.
- Judge Mike Corrigan, a Westlake Republican, to replace publican, to replace Chief Justice Justice Lanzinger, a Republican.

**HIGH COURT SUBSTITUTES** 



**Brvant:** 

**Findlay** 

Republican



Gorman: Cincinnati

**Democrat** 



Karpinski: Cleveland Westlake **Democrat** Republican

Continued from Page 1

"We are not going anywhere," Mr. Jackson said. "These are our

The Blade first reported April 3 that the bureau has invested \$50 million in Mr. Noe's rarecoin venture since 1998. The bureau is charged with paying the claims of injured workers.

Mr. Noe and his Ohio lawyer, Bill Wilkinson, did not return calls yesterday seeking com-

Earlier this month, the bureau decided to dissolve the coin venture amid concerns about its management. As many as 121 state-owned coins valued at about \$400,000 have been reported missing or stolen from the coin fund.

#### Noe will step down

Mr. Noe has agreed to step down as the general manager of the coin funds after a successor is chosen.

A number of state officials and agencies, including Gov. Bob Taft, the inspector general, auditor, secretary of state, and Ohio Ethics Commission have called for investigations or audits into the coin fund, Mr. Noe, and people associated with the state's investment.

Additionally, Mr. Noe, a prominent Republican fund-raiser, is under investigation by the FBI for possible campaign-finance violations concerning contributions to the Bush re-election

campaign. Jen Detwiler, a spokesman for state auditor Betty Montgomery, who has called for a special audit of the coin fund, said yesterday the auditor's office had representatives at the Noe headquarters who were also stopped from inspecting coins.

### 'It's a big concern'

"We are concerned that the state has invested in coins and we've yet to see any," Ms. Detwiler said. "It's a big concern."

Acting on orders from Governor Taft to "execute a complete inventory" of coins owned by the state, investigators yesterday also converged upon locations in Sarasota, Fla., Broomall, Pa., and Evergreen, Colo., where Mr. Noe or his subsidiaries are holding state-owned coins.

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State fraud investigators said they gained entry to Tom Noe's Vintage Coins and Collectibles in Monclova Township but were not able to see any of the rare coins owned by the state.

Bureau officials were able to secure coins at a subsidiary office in Wilmington, Del.. The state-owned coins are in the process of being sent by truck to Columbus for review by the end of the week, said Mr. Jackson. He said state officials learned the coins were already boxed for a trade show in Atlanta, so the bureau decided to have the coins brought to Columbus rather than sending inspectors to Delaware.

Investigators were to begin the inventory process on Monday, but Mr. Noe's attorney, Mr. Wilkinson, advised the coin dealer to bar inspectors from the locations until his lawyers could be on hand during inspections.

inspectors yesterday for the first time were allowed access to Mr. Noe's Monclova Township office, and the Pennsylvania office of Delaware Valley Rare Coin. On Tuesday — the same day the state sued Mr. Noe to gain control of the coin funds - inspectors were permitted to begin making an inventory of the coins held in offices in Evergreen, Colo., and Sarasota, Fla.,

with Mr. Noe's lawyers present. Mr. Noe's Denver attorney, Dan Levin, said the inspection was running smoothly at the Colorado office. He said it was too early to tell if any coins are

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"It's basically very cooperative," he said. "Our clients really are being very cooperative from what I can see.

Mr. Levin said the inspectors 'appear to be meticulous and detailed in going over their inventory." He said employees in the Colorado office have been helping investigators place coins and understand their recordkeeping system.

"They are actively assisting the inspectors," Mr. Levin said. "The inspectors don't know where everything is. Our clients are cooperating with them fully and showing them where everything is and going over each item with them."

Early yesterday, Mr. Jackson appeared confident that similar progress would be made at Mr. Noe's Ohio office.

We had every reason this morning to believe the reviews would go on accordingly," he said. "In the other locations, things appear to be progressing at the expected pace.

### Excuses in Monclova

But, in Mr. Noe's main office in Monclova Township, Mr. Jackson said investigators heard excuses that "the inventory isn't fully prepared" or "we'll get [a coin] to you in a half hour.'

"Those [excuses] aren't going to pass muster anymore," he

Mr. Jackson said "to the best of my knowledge" he believed Mr. Noe could be found in contempt of Tuesday's court order requiring him to provide the bureau with reasonable access to the

"I believe it opens the door to more aggressive legal action," he said. "We don't know what the ogic is. But [today], we intend to have access to all of our coins."

Kim Norris, a spokesman for state Attorney General Jim Petro, said the state received word

that Mr. Noe's Capital Coin will comply today with the inventory check at the Monclova Township

"We are hopeful they will comply, but if they don't we are prepared to take immediate action," Ms. Norris said.

The attorney general's office believed it had legal access to all five sites where inventory is being held, Ms. Norris said. She cited a preliminary injunction that a Franklin County judge ordered on Tuesday that immediately froze the assets of the coin funds. On Tuesday, Mr. Petro asked Judge David Cain of Franklin County Common Pleas Court for an order to turn over complete control of the coin funds to the bureau.

Noe to stop selling, transferring, ing rare coins purchased with disposing of, or removing any of the assets of the coin funds without the state's permission.

But state Sen. Marc Dann, Democrat from suburban Youngstown, said the attorney general sued Mr. Noe too late, and Mr. Petro should not have agreed to a preliminary injunction that Mr. Noe accepted.

"If we had a real attorney general, we would be inside, block-

ing Noe out," Mr. Dann said. Mr. Dann said the state should ask a judge to order the coin inventory held, either by using a receiver or letting the state take possession until legal issues are

'They made a deal with Noe's lawyer about this inspection. Has it dawned on them that they have broken the deal? I'm a dumb divorce lawyer from Youngstown. If one of [my] client's husbands had a rare coin collection, I'd have control of it,"

he said. Mr. Jackson said the assets of the coin fund would not be physically removed until the in-

ventory is finalized. "The primary thing is making marshal them to."

### THE NOE FILE

■April 3: The Blade first reports that the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation has invested \$50 million in rare coins with Maumee coin dealer and prominent Republican fund-raiser Tom Noe. The initial story also reports that two gold coins worth \$300,000 were lost in the mail in 2003 and that Mr. Noe wrote off \$850,000 in bad debt to cover a failed business relationship.

■April 7: Gov. Bob Taft defends Mr. Noe and the state's investment in rare coins in a Blade interview. "The bottom line is: Is it making money for the state? And it was. He was making money for the state; what's the problem?" the governor said.

■ April 7: Ohio Inspector General Tom Charles announces he will investigate "alleged wrongful acts associated with the investment practices" of the state Bureau of Workers' Compensation.

■April 22: The Blade reports that Mark Chrans, the California coin dealer who caused Mr. Noe to write off \$850,000 in bad debts, was convicted in 1986 of fraud and perjury in federal court for faking a coin transaction to cover up drug money. He spent less than a vear in a federal penitentiary.

■ April 27: Federal authorities confirm that the FBI is investigating Mr. Noe for possible violations of campaign contribution laws. Federal agents are probing whether Mr. Noe gave people money in order for them to give to the Bush re-election campaign, allowing him to exceed federal spending limits.

The judge agreed, ordering Mr. 

May 1: The number of missstate money rises to 121. documents obtained by The Blade show. State records show that 119 coins, in addition to the two gold coins "lost in the mail," were also missing and possibly stolen by a Colorado coin dealer hired by Mr. Noe.

> ■ May 9: State officials announce that they will dissolve their \$50 million investment in rare coins with Mr. Noe. "We had concerns about the ability of the managers to commit the necessary time and resources to make it profitable," said a state spokesman.

■ May 10: Mr. Noe resigns his seats on the Ohio Turnpike Commission and the Ohio Board of Regents. Governor Taft says he did not request the resignations but will accept them.

sure all the coins are accounted for," Mr. Jackson said. "Once that process is completed, we'll move forward on figuring out how to marshal the assets and where to

The state is keeping a close watch on Tom Noe's business.

■ May 12: The Blade reports that Governor Taft's former chief of staff, Brian Hicks, twice rented Mr. Noe's Florida Keys home and paid below market price for his springbreak stays.

■May 11: The Blade asks the Ohio Supreme Court to order the state Bureau of Workers' Compensation to release uncensored records related to the bureau's \$50 million investment in rare coins with Mr. Noe.

■ May 18: Five of Ohio's seven Supreme Court justices announce they will not hear any public records cases brought before the court that involve Mr. Noe. The five, including Judith Ann Lanzinger of Toledo, are all recipients of campaign cash from Mr. Noe.

■ May 23: Governor Taft orders state fraud investigators to "execute a complete inventory" of all rare coins owned by the state. Investigators are refused entry by Mr. Noe at offices where coins are kept.

■ May 24: Ohio Attorney General James Petro goes to court to take control of state rarecoin funds from Mr. Noe. The Ohio inspector general seeks telephone and e-mail records from Governor Taft's office for four high-level current and former employees for allegedly taking gifts from Mr. Noe.

■Yesterday: The Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation says bureau personnel are conducting "around-theclock" surveillance of Mr. Noe's Monclova Township office after three days of excuses to Ohio fraud investigators. Also, the bureau threatens aggressive legal action if Mr. Noe does not start cooperating.

Staff writers Christopher D. Kirkpatrick and Mike Wilkinson contributed to this report.

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# Siblings saw horror, authorities suspect

## Brother, sister believed abducted from Idaho home by family's killers

COEUR d'ALENE, Idaho — If Dylan and Shasta Groene are still alive, and the sheriff desperately wants to believe so, they may have a ghastly story to tell.

Dylan, 9, and Shasta, 8, were abducted a week and a half ago, probably after they witnessed their mother, her boyfriend, and an elder brother being bound and then bludgeoned to death inside their home, authorities said.

After searching across the Northwest and fielding more than 1,150 tips, the FBI and local investigators said they have no suspects, no strong leads as to the children's whereabouts, and no idea why the victims were killed and the youngsters taken.

"I have a need to believe those children are still alive," Sheriff Rocky Watson said.

Today, investigators may begin searching a landfill where trash from the area of the said. They are looking for clues or the murder weapon.

The children's mother, Brenda Groene, 40, her son, Slade, 13, and the mother's boyfriend, Mark McKenzie, 37, were killed inside the white, cinder-block house a few miles east of town.

Ms. Groene and other members of the family had been mixed up in drugs and petty crime over the years, but investigators have not publicly connected any of that to the

Authorities have speculated there was more than one killer because all the victims were bound. Officers suspect the killer was known to the victims, because there was no forced

Suspicion has centered on Steven Groene, 48, ex-husband of Brenda and father of the three children. But deputies insist he is not a suspect, even though he has no alibi for the night of family's home was dumped last the slavings, failed a lie detec-



Shasta Groene



Dylan Groene

the whereabouts of the children, and issued a puzzling public plea to the abductors.

"Please, please release my children safely," Mr. Groene said last week. "They had nothing to do with any of this.

Officers could not say what "any of this" referred to.

Because their home was close to I-90, just west of a pass in the Rocky Mountains, investigators have said it is possible that a motorist committed the crimes at random and then fled on the interstate highway.

The Groene family lived on the edge of the community, both physically and financially. Coeur d'Alene is a booming resort and week, the sheriff's department tor test when asked if he knew retirement town, thanks to its

postcard lake and abundant golf courses. Like many resort areas, it is also home to people like the Groenes, struggling to get by on

low-paying jobs. Steven and Brenda Groene were married in 1986 and had five children before they divorced in 2001. Mr. Groene said in a TV interview that they had squabbled over issues such as visitation rights as recently as a few days before the slayings, but otherwise got along.

He lived with his former mother-in-law and Ms. Groene lived in the home owned by Mr. McKenzie, who is her cousin. Slade, Dylan, and Shasta lived with her. Of the two elder children, Jesse, 18, is in jail on burglary charges. Vance, 20, had a

juvenile record. Steven Groene, 48, is a blues musician. He has acknowledged heavy narcotics use in the past and was arrested once for bat-

At the time of her death, Ms. Groene was on probation for possession of drug paraphernalia. The county coroner said Brenda Groene and Mark McKenzie had illegal drugs in their systems.

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