



3 key areas for FSU depth chart as Alabama game arrives

SPORTS, 1B

TALLAHASSEE DEMOCRAT

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DONNA ADELSON TRIAL



Robert Adelson, who is said to be estranged from his family, testifies in the trial of his mother, Donna Adelson on Aug. 25. PHOTOS BY ALICIA DEVINE/TALLAHASSEE DEMOCRAT



Tim Jansen
Legal analysis

A family reunion – with daggers

It was another day of Shakespear-ean Tragedy in Courtroom 3G in the State of Florida v. Donna Adelson. The dysfunctional family reunion was the result of two subpoenas issued by the prosecution.

Both Wendi and Rob Adeslon be- came the main attractions in the state prosecution of their mother, Donna Adelson, for first degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder in the Tallahassee assassination of FSU law professor Dan Markel.

In 1972 Paul Simon wrote Mother and Child Reunion. Part of the lyrics include: "A mother and Child Reunion are only a motion away...". Or in the case of Donna Adelson only 2 subpoenas away.

Coincidentally, their father, Harvey was present to see this unusual event take place while he was there support- ing his wife, Donna.

The facts and witnesses in this case have many twists and turns that are consistent with a well-written tragedy, Unfortunately, this is not fiction and the case is the result of a brutal and heinous murder. And these two chil- dren of the defendant Adelson may be the most significant and damning wit- nesses for the State of Florida.

Here's why.

Wendi Adelson: Trapped by mails and legal filings to give damaging testimony against her mom

The courtroom went eerily silent as Wendi Adelson approached the wit- ness stand. A full gallery watched in awe as Wendi avoided making any eye contact with her mother.

Donna was intently staring at her

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‘She hated him’

Estranged son Robert Adelson describes final phone call with mom on Dan Markel murder

Jeff Burlew and Elena Barrera Tallahassee Democrat | USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA

Robert Adelson, the estranged son of Donna and Harvey Adelson, took the witness stand Aug. 25 to recall the chill- ing final conversation he had with his mom.

It was May 28, 2016, two days after news broke of the arrests of Sigfredo Garcia and Luis Rivera in the murder- for-hire of Dan Markel, their former in- law.

At that point, the murder mystery was nearly two years old, and Robert Adelson, a New York physician and the oldest of the Adelsons three kids, con- sidered their arrests “big news.” He said he and his wife debated whether to phone his parents on the day of the ar- rests but decided to wait until their wedding anniversary, when he was sure they’d call.

Testifying on the fifth day of his mom’s murder trial, Robert Adelson told

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Donna Adelson talks with her defense attorney Josh Zelman during a recess Aug. 25.

Tallahassee’s ‘big three’ weigh 2026 mayoral runs

Between Ausley, Graham and Lawson, one is ‘definitely considering it’

James Call
USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA

What do former state lawmaker Lo- ranne Ausley, former U.S. Rep. and Bi- den administration official Gwen Gra- ham and former state lawmaker and U.S. Rep. Al Lawson Jr. currently have in common?

They’re all not definitively saying they’re going to run for Tallahassee mayor – but they’re also not saying they’re *not* going to run.

To be sure, Ausley, Graham and Law- son are among Tallahassee’s better

known and more popular politicians. All are currently out of office, but from Lawson’s election to the Florida House in 1982 to Ausley’s 2022 loss in a state senate race, they each won by a majority vote a combined 22 times in congressional and legislative elections.

Now, they’ve become the focus of the Tallahassee political class’s guessing game on who’s in and who’s out of the running after current Mayor John E. Dailey’s announcement that he’s not seeking a third term in 2026.

Sitting City Commissioner Jeremy Matlow, a favorite among local progres- sives, is the only declared candidate for next year’s mayor’s race besides politi- cal newcomer Camron “Justice” Cooper. Others known to be eyeing the seat in- clude Leon County Commissioners

More inside

- Mayor Dailey backs Camron Cooper in fight for ballot eligibility. **5A**
- 2026 Election: What races will be on the ballot and who is running? **4A**

Christian Caban and Rick Minor.

‘I am definitely considering it’

None of the “big three” would dis- close who has contacted them and with whom they’ve discussed campaigns.

“I am starting to get this question rather frequently and I am definitely considering it,” Ausley, who represented Tallahassee in the Legislature for 14 years, said on Aug. 21.

Graham gave up a congressional seat to run for governor in 2018 and now splits her time between Tallahassee and Washington, D.C., where her daughter is expecting a child in October.

“I have had people that I respect greatly ask me to run for mayor and that has had an impact on me,” Graham said.

Lawson said he was invited to speak to a group of business leaders during the Tallahassee Chamber’s annual confer- ence at Amelia Island earlier this month but declined.

“They’re hassling me all the time, calling me nearly every day. They want me to run for mayor. They say, ‘you could be a voice for everybody.’ I got to look at it,” said Lawson, who has represented

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