Riley hires new district director

By Jeff Amy
Star Business Writer

U.S. Rep. Bob Riley, R-Ashland, said Tuesday that he has hired radio host Leland Whaley as his new district director.

Whaley, a former television news reporter, is also communications director for the Alabama Family Alliance, a conservative policy research group. In that capacity, he has continued to host "Alabama Live," a politically-themed talk show carried on radio stations around the state. He started the show in 1997.

Whaley couldn't be reached for comment Tuesday.

Riley said he had interviewed about a dozen people before deciding on who would run his constituent service operation and three field offices.

"He's an extremely bright, articulate young man who has a tremendous amount of energy," Riley said. "I'm happy to have added him to our staff."

Whaley takes over May 1. Currently a Shelby County resident, Whaley will work out of Riley's Anniston office in the U.S. Courthouse Building on Noble Street. Riley also has offices in Opelika and Clanton.

Whaley replaces Duane Higgins, who left the post in March to take over as president of the Calhoun County Chamber of Commerce. Before Higgins joined Riley in 1996, he had worked for the Alabama Family Alliance as well, for two years.

Whaley grew up in Chambers County and attended Auburn University.

"He understands the district, and he understands the people in the district," Riley said.

Whaley worked as a television news reporter in Columbus, Ga. From 1994 to 1996 he reported for Birmingham's WBRG where he won several reporting awards, including an Emmy.

In 1996, Whaley left WBRC to serve as communications director for the Alabama Republican Party. It was from there that he left to found "Alabama Live."

Riley said Whaley's top job will be to maintain high-quality constituent services. Riley said he would discuss further goals with Whaley soon.

"We'll meet with him in the next week or so to lay out our priorities," Riley said.

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> — Rep. Bob Riley R-Ashland

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