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McLennan County DA hires lawyer Minton

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By David Hanners
Staff Writer of The News

McLennan County District Attorney Vic Feazell, who believes he is the target of a federal grand jury investigation, said Wednesday that he has hired high-powered defense lawyer Roy Minton.

Minton, of Austin, has a long list of political clients. Most recently, he won an acquittal for Texas Attorney General Jim

Mattox, who was charged with commercial bribery.

"The federal grand jury started meeting in Austin, and what I've been told is that they're talking to people about me, so I decided I better get a lawyer," Feazell said. "I knew they were mad, but I didn't think they would take it this far."

Feazell, 34, declined to identify who "they" were. But in recent weeks, there have been reports that state and federal

authorities have been investigating Feazell's office. Among the items believed to be under scrutiny is the handling of driving-while-intoxicated cases.

The district attorney — who on Wednesday announced he is running for re-election next year — has denied any wrongdoing. Authorities have refused to confirm or deny whether an investigation is under way. Assistant U.S. Attorney Jan Patterson, who is involved in the

grand jury probe, did not return phone calls to her Austin office Wednesday.

Rip Collins, a partner in Minton's law firm, said Feazell has been left in the dark as to what is being investigated.

"We haven't been able to find out what they're looking for. If you find out, let me know," he said.

Feazell, of Waco, drew attention earlier.
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lier this year when he convened a grand jury to look into charges that the confessions given by self-professed serial killer Henry Lee Lucas had been coerced.

Lucas, who once claimed to have killed almost 600 people, now says he killed only one — his mother. He says detectives often "fed" him information about crimes, and that he confessed to make law enforcement officers — particularly a special Texas Ranger task force — look bad.

Lucas had confessed to three murders in McLennan County, and earlier this month, a state grand jury in Waco refused to indict Lucas in the crimes. Mattox's office is still continuing its own investigation.

The district attorney has said the investigations of his office may have been prompted as revenge for the McLennan County grand jury query into the way authorities handled some of the Lucas confessions.

"My office is proud of the fact that we've taken on some very unpopular stands, but they were stands that need to be taken,"

Feazell said.

Feazell said his telephone has been illegally tapped. "We've got physical proof of that," he said, declining to elaborate. "We've been suspicious that our phone was bugged for the past three or four months, since about April, but it was confirmed about a month ago."

And the district attorney said that on Tuesday, an unidentified man "stole" a sack of garbage from outside the home of John Ben Sutter, Feazell's administrative assistant.

"I'd be glad to deliver it (Sutter's garbage) down to the police station personally, but they'd probably arrest me for littering," Feazell said.

The district attorney said he was announcing his bid for re-election 10 months before the May Democratic primary "to dispel any speculation that I may not be running again, or that I'm thinking about running for higher office."

Feazell, an ordained Southern Baptist minister, was elected district attorney in 1982.