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Perspective Broward

“Bates case fallout: Sen. Jenne erupts at old buddy”
By Steve Bousquet

Heard the one about Sen. Ken Jenne and Rep. Fred Lippman?

A week ago Friday, minutes after the House passed a bill forcing the North Broward Hospital District to pay up to \$6 million to the Justin Bates family in a malpractice case Jenne entered the House and had a nose-to nose talk with Lippman, Jenne’s law firm handles the district’s legal business.

“A few members said they’d never seen him so angry, “ said Rep. Ben Graber.

“I heard he was extremely upset with Mr. Lippman,” added Rep. Anne Mackenzie.

“I was told Ken got in Fred’s face,” said Rep. Steve Geller.

Naturally, there were no witnesses. But the news was all over the Capitol in a flash, with some accounts that Jenne shoved Lippman, his friend for 25 years. Lippman says that didn’t happen.

Why was Jenne so upset? When it came time, after a long discussion, to vote on the most hotly debated Broward issue of the session, Lippman was nowhere to be found. A well-timed stroll to the water cooler to sidestep a tough vote, perhaps?

No way, Lippman says: It was a hectic time in the session and he was on a “mission” for House leaders on another bill. He later filed a “no” vote. Legislators think Jenne’s rage was directed at Lippman’s AWOL status and/or his silence during the debate – even though it wouldn’t have changed the outcome.

What did the combatants say for themselves?

“ I don’t recall,” Jenne said. “Was I in the House that night?”

“No comment. You’ll have to talk to other people,” Lippman said. It was a moment of legislative emotion, and I’ve known him too long to take it any other way.”

Geller’s story

Then there’s Geller, the Hallandale Democrat also absent at the time of the Bates vote. The lawyer overwhelmingly supports claims bills, and he is not known for ducking tough votes, but not this time. You see, Geller’s mother’s fiancé is **Amadeo “Trinchi”**

Trinchitell, chairman of the hospital district board and an opponent of the claims bill passed by the Legislature.

“ I have never ducked a difficult vote,” Gellar said. “But I try to avoid voting where it might create a family problem.” Unlike Lippman, Gellar didn’t file a cote afterward, so he remains officially uncommitted. Mackenzie voted yes afterward.