

# The Alabama Municipal JOURNAL

March/April 2019

Volume 76, Number 5



**Women in  
Leadership**  
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# The Alabama Municipal JOURNAL

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#LiveLocallyAlabama

## Table of Contents

A Message from the Editor .....	4
The President's Report.....	5
Policy Committees to Meet in March and April	
Municipal Overview.....	7
The Importance of Mentorship	
Remaining Relevant in the 21st Century	
Diversity of Thought – Women in Leadership Roles .....	9
A conversation with Gov. Kay Ivey .....	13
Lurleen Wallace: AL's First Female Governor .....	16
Mayor Loxcil Tuck: Framing the Expectation that Women Should Lead.....	16
Q & A with Mayor Marty Handlon .....	17
Q & A with Councilwoman Sadie Britt .....	19
Q & A with Mayor Leigh Dollar .....	20
Q & A with Councilwoman Jennifer Williams Smith .....	21
Majority Female Council First in Tuscaloosa's History..	25
Congresswoman Terri Sewell .....	26
Congresswoman Martha Roby .....	27
Women Serving in the Alabama Legislature .....	28
Municipal Officials Work with The Women's Fund to Address Poverty in Shelby County .....	29
Saving a Rural Alabama Community .....	31
The Legal Viewpoint.....	37
Protecting Municipal Financial Institution Excise Taxes and Updates from Legal Department	
Legal FAQ.....	40
Legal Clearinghouse.....	41
2019 Advocacy Day/CMO Agenda .....	42
Now is the Time to Reinvest in Alabama's Future ...	43
2019 Annual Convention Quick Guide .....	46

## On the Cover:

In honor of Women's History Month, most of the Mayors and Councilwomen who hold leadership roles with the League are pictured with Gov. Kay Ivey at the State Capitol. Photo by Hal Yeager/Governor's Office. See articles beginning page 9.

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# A Message from the Editor



Photo Credit: Councilwoman Jennifer Williams Smith, Jasper

The Alabama League of Municipalities was founded in 1935. Nearly 50 years later, in 1981, the League membership elected its first female president, Nina Miglionico, Council President for the City of Birmingham. In her President's Address delivered at the 1982 convention on April 26th in Mobile, she said:

“On a personal note, let me say that I am not unmindful of the particular honor I received in being the first woman and first councilmember to be elected as President of the Alabama League of Municipalities. This has reemphasized to me that our great organization is truly composed of dedicated individuals who fully believe in and practice a fellowship of sharing in behalf of public service.”

**Fellowship of sharing.** I never met Miss Nina, as she was known to nearly everyone, but I do know she was an impressive leader and a fierce advocate for local government – and that her leadership contributions to this organization, to local government and to the state were significant. That being said, I *have* had the good fortune to have known and worked closely with each of the three women who have since served as League President, as well as several women – mayors and councilmembers – who have made an impact serving on the League's Executive Committee and/or as a policy committee chair or vice chair. In honor of Women's History Month (March), this issue of the *Journal* salutes women in government, particularly those officials – who hail from across the state – serving in leadership roles with the League. An in-depth article can be found beginning on page 9, which also illustrates why diversity of thought is critical to remaining relevant in the 21st Century. Additionally, there are several Q/A conversations within this issue with some of these leaders as well as a very special Q/A with Gov. Kay Ivey, Alabama's second female governor in its nearly 200-year history (see p. 12). My sincere thanks to Gov. Ivey and her staff, especially her Director of Photography, Hal Yeager, for working closely with us to make the cover photo happen at the Capitol on a cold, rainy day the same week as her inauguration! It was a history-making moment – one that symbolizes the importance of *all* levels of government working together for the greater good of Alabama. Also in this issue is an article about The Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham (p. 29) as well as our Live Locally Alabama feature (p.31) that looks closely at how the loss of a city's only grocery store has a profound effect on the entire community and what steps can be taken to recover if that were to happen to your municipality.



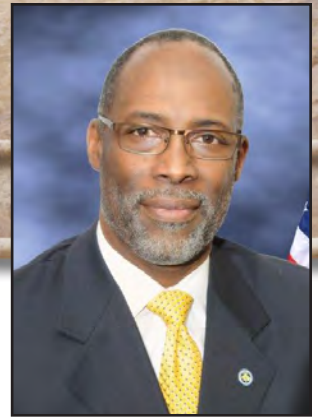
It truly is an honor to work for an organization and with people whose mission is to improve the quality of life for Alabama's citizens through effective, efficient municipal government. All politics are local – “home” is where life, particularly *quality of life*, truly happens. Municipal officials and employees have a daunting and often thankless job that doesn't end at close of the day. Change can be slow to occur and is not necessarily appreciated immediately.

I am encouraged and excited about what's ahead for our cities and towns, as well as the Alabama League of Municipalities. Yes, there are many challenges – there always will be – but through the *fellowship of sharing*, ours will be a more effective organization ensuring an even greater Alabama!

Carrie

# The President's Report

Council President Jesse Matthews, Bessemer



## Policy Committees to Meet in March and April

As many of you well know, the League – our League – was created in 1935 to provide Alabama’s cities and towns with a voice at the Alabama Legislature. Over the past eight decades, the League has morphed into an organization that provides a number of outstanding professional services and many invaluable resources; however, the League’s first and foremost role is legislative advocacy. Since its inception, the League has functioned as the major lobbying organization – both statewide and nationally – of all our municipalities. Without the Alabama League of Municipalities, municipal government would have very limited, if any, influence in the legislative process and would certainly not benefit from the current levels of authority we continue to aggressively protect and defend during every legislative cycle.

To aid in our legislative process, six standing committees are charged with the review and development of League policies and goals which encompass a broad spectrum of issues affecting municipal government. The chair and vice chair of each of these standing committees are elected annually at the convention. Committee members are selected by the respective committee chairs to provide representation from each congressional district and to ensure representation of cities and towns of all sizes on each committee.

Committee rosters are available online at [alalm.org](http://alalm.org). Go to the “About the League” tab at the top of the home page and select “Officers and Committees” in the drop-down menu.

### 2019 Policy Committee Dates League Headquarters, Montgomery

- **EENR:** Tuesday, April 2
- **CED:** Tuesday, April 9
- **FAIR:** Wednesday, April 10
- **TPSC:** Tuesday, April 16
- **HD:** Tuesday, April 23

### Standing Committees

The League’s six standing committees are: State and Federal Legislation, which met on December 8th to determine our 2019 legislative priorities and which also serves as a resolutions and screening committee; Finance, Administration and Intergovernmental Relations; Energy, Environment and Natural Resources; Community and Economic Development; Transportation, Public Safety and Communication; and Human Development.

The five standing committees (other than State and Federal Legislation) – also known as policy committees – meet annually, generally with resource advisors to review existing League policy, national policy and to adopt revised goals and recommendations in the respective areas of each committee. Committee members then have an opportunity to exchange ideas with these representatives and obtain critical contact information. In addition, what takes place at these policy committee meetings directly impacts the direction of our League and can also influence decisions made by the Alabama Legislature, Congress and state and federal regulatory agencies. That being said, if you agree to serve on a committee, you must attend the meetings. Unforeseen circumstances preventing attendance are understandable; however, it is our responsibility as leaders to make every effort to be present and engaged. Our League’s policy committees are only effective if a quorum is present to conduct the business of the committee. Otherwise, necessary recommendations to move the committee and the League forward are impossible.

A list of policy committee meeting dates is posted in the box to the left. All meetings are held at League headquarters in Montgomery followed by lunch and the opportunity to visit your legislative delegations at the Alabama State House that afternoon. In fact, these meetings are *specifically* scheduled during the regular legislative session so you will have an opportunity to meet with your lawmakers and discuss issues critical to your communities as well as the League. ALM Advocacy Communications Coordinator Kayla Bass serves as the staff liaison for our five policy committees. Please contact her at [kaylab@alalm.org](mailto:kaylab@alalm.org) should you have questions regarding a committee or an upcoming meeting. ■

# HAPPY BIRTHDAY, ALABAMA!

**It's Alabama's 200th birthday.  
Join the celebration!**

Special bicentennial events and activities are planned throughout the state in 2019. Visit [ALABAMA200.org](http://ALABAMA200.org) to learn more about events in your area!

**200**  
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# Municipal Overview

By Ken Smith, Executive Director



## The Importance of Mentorship

Are effective leaders born or made? Are we born with the skills necessary for strong leadership or do we develop those abilities through education and experience? You can find studies supporting either view.

Regardless of which side you come down on, very few would dispute that being an effective leader most likely requires a combination of the two. While individuals are born with certain personality traits and characteristics that enable them to adjust to leadership roles more easily, given the complexity of most leadership positions, it just isn't realistic to expect someone to be born with all the tools needed to direct a group or project. You have to develop the tools needed to lead others.

You need to have the desire to lead, though, or at least be willing to take on those challenges. And that desire and willingness is likely innate or is learned very early in life. But before a leadership opportunity or need arises, effective leaders lay the ground work they will need to succeed.

They learn first by studying the leadership skills of those they admire – they read, they observe, they ask questions and they strive to absorb as much about those leaders as possible. And – if they're really smart – these budding leaders also try to understand why the qualities or actions made others willing to follow. The best leaders also watch to see what doesn't work. Strong leaders aren't perfect – they make mistakes like everyone else.

Effective leaders accept that they are going to slip-up at times, but they don't let those errors defeat them. They work through those failures, learn from them, and come right back, trying to avoid mistakes in the future. These leaders are able to pivot, rejecting unsuccessful approaches and concepts. They seek advice from others and listen. This may lead them in a new direction. Because effective leaders recognize that they don't know everything.

At the same time, a leader has to be willing to reject ideas that they don't feel will move a project forward. For this and other reasons, a leader must realize that he or she will make decisions that may not be popular. But I don't think that popularity is the true measure of leadership.

Some people lead only because they are in positions of power. In my opinion, there's a difference in being in charge and leading. Anyone with power can order others around. A good leader doesn't use power just to flex their muscles or show control. They use their authority to benefit the project or organization they've been selected to lead. They seek input from others, changing course if a better idea arises.

I once had a job where on my first day, a long-time employee presented me with a situation and asked me what I would do. I told her. Later that day, someone else asked a different question. Still later, someone else came to me for input. They then took

those ideas to our boss. Here I was, on my first day on the job, essentially making decisions for staff members who had been in their positions for years. It wasn't that these employees were incapable of doing their jobs – they simply needed someone with a fresh set of eyes who could digest the information in front of them and reach a reasonable conclusion. I learned that I was capable of making decisions, explaining why I believed in my approach and – perhaps most importantly – owning up to my part in making the decision, even if it later proved not to be the best course of action.

Because a leader has to be willing to make decisions. Input from others, study groups, research – all of that is designed only to enable a leader to make an informed decision. Many fail that ultimate test of leadership.

At least, that's what I've learned from the best leaders I've known.

If a person who wants to lead is lucky – like I've been – he or she gets to work alongside and learn directly from leaders they admire. In many situations, learning first-hand is the best way to develop needed skills. And until you've actually been a leader, you really can't know what that is like.

### Women in Government

I've been blessed to work with and learn from some truly outstanding individuals. Several of the women profiled in this month's *Alabama Municipal Journal* are among them.

The role of women in government at all levels has come under intense scrutiny following the November elections. A record number of women ran for office nationwide, with more than 250 female candidates running for state legislative races, governorships and national office. A record number of women were elected to positions in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate. Alabama was no exception, where Governor Kay Ivey was elected to a full term in office.

But the fact remains that women seem to be under-represented in elected office compared to their numbers among the general population. According to 2010 Census figures, women make up more than fifty percent of the U.S. population. Women make up 24.5 percent of state legislatures nationally. They hold 19.4 positions in Congress.

According to a 2019 study from the Center for American Women and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University, 23% of mayors of America's 100 largest municipalities are women. The same study notes that 21.8% of cities with populations over 30,000 have women mayors.

Only one city in Alabama with a population over 30,000 is listed as having a female mayor.

Why aren't women better represented among elected officials?

*continued page 44*



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# Remaining Relevant in the 21st Century

## Diversity of Thought – Women in Leadership Roles

By: Carrie Banks • Communications Director • ALM



*Council President Nina Miglionico, Birmingham  
ALM President 1981-1982*



*Mayor Sue Glidewell  
Rainbow City  
ALM President 1994-1995*



*Council President Alice Reynolds, Montgomery  
ALM President 2001-2002*



*Councilwoman Sadie Britt  
Lincoln  
ALM President 2015-2016*

March is Women’s History month – a time dedicated by many state and national institutions, including the Smithsonian, the Library of Congress, the National Gallery of Art and the National Endowment for the Humanities, to commemorate, study and celebrate the vital role of women in our nation’s history.

According to [womenshistorymonth.gov](http://womenshistorymonth.gov), this observance originated as a national celebration in 1981 when Congress authorized and requested the President to proclaim the week beginning March 7, 1982 as “Women’s History Week.” This continued for five years when in 1987 Congress designated the month of March 1987 as “Women’s History Month.” Presidential proclamations have continued each year since.

### *Alabama Women in Government*

Throughout Alabama’s nearly 200-year history, a number of women have broken barriers and played significant roles that have resonated well beyond our borders – three receiving the nation’s highest civilian awards: Helen Keller, the Congressional Medal of Freedom; Rosa Parks, the Congressional Gold Medal; and Harper Lee, the Presidential Medal of Freedom. According to the 2010 Census, nearly 51 percent of Alabama’s population is female; however, examining the role of women in government presents an extremely limited landscape. Five women have represented Alabama in Congress, two of whom were elected in 2011, Representatives Martha Roby and Terri Sewell, and are now serving their fourth terms. Two women have served Alabama as Governor: Lurleen Wallace for 16 months from January 1967 until her death in May 1968 and Kay Ivey, who, while serving as Lieutenant Governor, was sworn in following the resignation of Gov. Robert Bentley in 2017 and then elected to a full term in the 2018 gubernatorial election. Currently, out of 140 members in the Alabama Legislature, 22 are women – 16 percent of the body. And while exact numbers for women serving in municipal office are not available, of the state’s 463 incorporated municipalities, female mayors make up between 15 and 20 percent.

### *Women in Leadership Roles with the Alabama League of Municipalities*

The Alabama League of Municipalities was founded in 1935. Forty-six years later, in 1981, Council President Nina Miglionico (“Miss Nina”) of Birmingham was the first woman elected League President. The daughter of Italian immigrants, Miglionico was a lifelong Birmingham resident who later became one of the first female lawyers in Alabama. She was the first woman elected to Birmingham’s city government, serving on the City Council for 22 years from 1963 until 1985. From 1978 until 1981, she served as Council President – the first female to hold that title. A graduate of Howard University, Miglionico earned her law degree from the Alabama School of Law in 1936 and is thought to be the first woman in Alabama

## Remaining Relevant in the 21st Century

to have established her own firm. With 73 years of service, she held the unique distinction of being the longest practicing female attorney in the history of the State of Alabama. She died at age 95 in May 2009.

Thirteen years later, in 1994, Mayor Sue Glidewell of Rainbow City became the League's second female president. A truly remarkable woman, Glidewell first entered public service as an employee of the City of Gadsden Water Department in 1950 – the beginning of her many exceptional years in public service. In 1967 she became the city clerk for Rainbow City where she served for 13 years before being elected Mayor in 1980 where she was instrumental in the development of Alabama Highway 77 and played a vital role in the growth of the city. Throughout her career as an elected official, she was extremely active with the League, serving on the Executive Committee as well as the Committee on State and Federal Legislation. She also served on the Alabama Municipal Insurance Corporation (AMIC) Board of Directors from 1992 until 2004 – with eight years as Chair – and remains the only female board member since its inception in 1989. After 24 years as an elected official and 37 years of service to Rainbow City, Glidewell opted not to run in 2004. However, she remains a devoted supporter of the League and attends the President's Banquet each year during the League's Annual Convention.

Montgomery Council President Alice Reynolds was elected League President in 2001 after serving many years on a number of League committees, including the Chair of the Building Subcommittee that was responsible for the 1995 expansion of the League's Montgomery headquarters to create a basement and add much needed office space. She was first elected to the Montgomery City Council in 1978. She retired in 2002 after 24 years in office where she was known to be a strong political ally instrumental in bringing Hyundai to Alabama. Reynolds died in December 2014 and will long be remembered as a mediator on the City Council, a champion of her community and a steward of progress for the League of Municipalities.

In 2015, Councilwoman Sadie Britt, "Ms. Sadie" as she's known to most, became the first African American female president of the Alabama League of Municipalities. She has been many things to many people including teacher, tutor, community activist and mentor. Throughout her life, and across her many roles, Councilwoman Britt has consistently led by example – with grace and dignity, an earnest and authentic persona who rarely raises her voice or speaks in anger. She doesn't have to. Hers is a calming presence that unites rather than divides. Her belief in unity and ability to work with many personality types are unique qualities that have served her well – both as an elementary school teacher who began her career during desegregation and as the first African American woman to serve on the Lincoln City Council where she first took office in 1993 when she was tapped by the mayor to fill an unexpired term. She has won re-election ever since. Councilwoman Britt served as the City's Library Liaison for many years. On July 21, 2014, Lincoln opened a spacious 7500 square foot modernized library featuring vibrant colors, a collection of over 16,500 books, 15 computers available to the public, comfortable reading chairs, a beautiful children's area with a large mural painted by a local artist and a wall

featuring bags of early childhood learning materials dubbed "Sadie's Satchels" in honor of Councilwoman Sadie Britt for her "unwavering dedication and devotion to The Lincoln Public Library." Since being appointed to the Council more than 25 years ago, Councilwoman Britt has been active with the Alabama League of Municipalities. Prior to being elected League President in 2015, she served as Vice President for a year. She was the Vice Chair of the League's Committee on State and Federal Legislation for two years and then Chair for two years. She had also previously served as the Vice Chair and then Chair of the Human Development Committee as well as several years on the League's Executive Committee. She currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Municipal Workers Compensation Fund, Inc. (MWCF). In addition, she immediately became involved in the League's Certified Municipal Official (CMO) program when it was launched in 1996 and was part of the first graduating class to earn Emeritus Status – the highest CMO level – in December 2015.



*Councilwoman Sadie Britt of Lincoln, League President (2015-2016), with Senator Richard Shelby at the 2016 NLC Congressional City Conference in Washington, D.C.*

## Remaining Relevant in the 21st Century



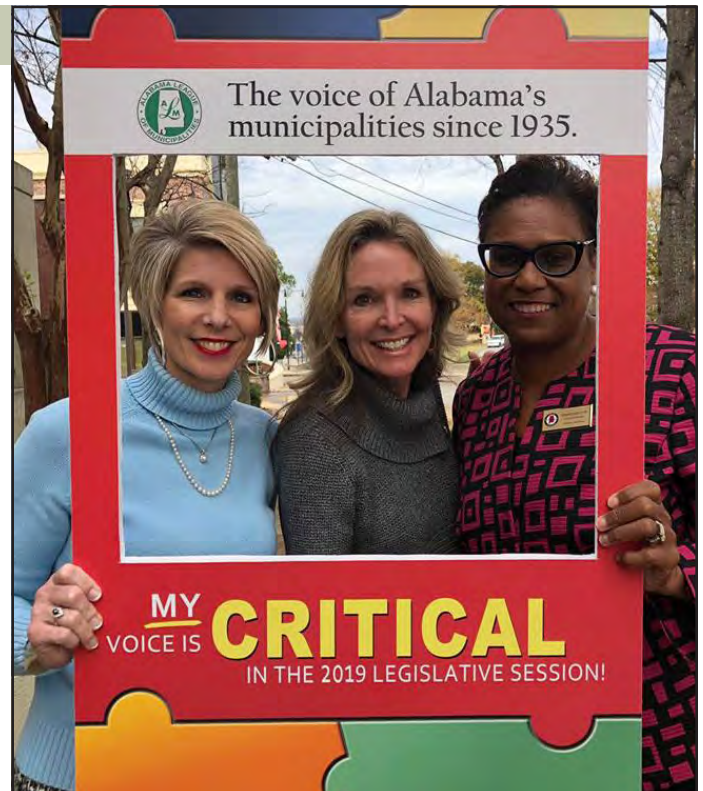
Council President Cynthia McCollum,  
Madison, NLC President 2007-08

In addition to these four dynamic Past Presidents, in 2007 former Madison Council President Cynthia McCollum became the first (and thus far *only*) municipal official from Alabama elected by her peers to serve as President of ALM's national affiliate, the National League of Cities (NLC). While representing Alabama both nationally and internationally via NLC, McCollum was extremely active with the League, serving on many committees, including the Executive Committee and Committee on State and Federal Legislation, and was one of only three female board members for the League's Municipal Workers Compensation Fund (MWCF) since its inception in 1976. Her political career began in 1987 when she was appointed to fill a new Madison City Council seat created for an African American to settle Madison's portion of the *Dillard vs. Crenshaw* statewide lawsuit to end at-large voting. She first won election in 1989 and served several terms both as Council President and President Pro Tem during her 18 years in office. Throughout her tenure, she was an advocate for Madison's employees, serving as Chairperson of the Human Resources Committee for well over 15 years. In addition, she served as liaison to several city departments, including the Public Works, Finance, Personnel and the Police departments, where she was instrumental in instituting many cost savings measures. She also took the lead and was successful in passing legislation to ban smoking in local restaurants. Since leaving office in 2008, she has remained an advocate not only of the League but of local government in Alabama.

### 2019 and Beyond

Of the 47 elected officials currently serving on ALM's Executive Committee, seven – around 15 percent – are women. Out of 59 possible leadership positions with ALM (serving on the Executive Committee, as a past president or as a committee chair or vice chair), 12 are women – just under 20 percent. Out of the 249 members serving on the League's six policy committees, 70 are women – approximately 28 percent. This past October, 40 municipal officials received their CMO certifications; 21 received their Advanced CMO certifications; and 10 were awarded the CMO Emeritus certification. Of those, 11, seven and three, respectively, were women for a total of 21 out of 71 graduates – just under 30 percent.

For nearly 85 years the League has been the voice of Alabama's municipalities – 463 cities and towns representing a diverse population statewide, just over half of which is female. *Diversity of thought* is one of the critical elements necessary to ensure ALM's voice remains relevant as the organization continues forward. Developing ways to mentor and encourage female officials to become active in League leadership, serve on policy committees and participate in the CMO program will greatly benefit not only ALM, but the communities and citizens throughout Alabama. ■



Mayor Leigh Dollar, Guntersville; Councilwoman Jennifer Williams Smith, Jasper; and Councilwoman Bridgette Jordan-Smith, Vincent have been active with the League since they were first elected to office and currently serve as Chair or Co-Chair of a League policy committee.

# Women in Leadership

## Connecting Our State and Communities



*Photo by Hal Yeager/Governor's Office*

*Bottom row: Mayor Loxcil Tuck, Tarrant, ALM Executive Committee; Governor Kay Ivey; Mayor Marva Gipson, Aliceville, ALM Executive Committee. Moving up the photo left to right: Councilwoman Ruthie Campbell, Robertsdale, Vice Chair, FAIR Committee; Mayor Sandra Burroughs, Lexington; ALM Executive Committee; Councilwoman Bridgette Jordan-Smith, Vincent, Chair, ALM HD Committee and Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham; Mayor Leigh Dollar, Guntersville, Vice Chair, ALM CED Committee; Mayor Gena Robbins, York, ALM Executive Committee; Mayor Hollie Cost, Montevallo; Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham; Councilwoman Veronica Hudson, Saraland, Chair, ALM FAIR Committee; Councilwoman Sadie Britt, Lincoln, ALM Past President; Mayor Marty Handlon, Alabaster; ALM Executive Committee; Councilwoman Jennifer Williams Smith, Jasper, Vice Chair, ALM HD Committee.*

# Gov. Kay Ivey

## Trailblazer; History Maker

*It can be easy to focus only on the issues that need the most immediate attention – such as education, roads and prisons – but in reality, as we dig in and begin to address these issues, I hope the progress that we make will inspire us to tackle other pressing challenges, such as health care, rural economic development, access to broadband and other important issues. After all, these matters can be seen either as a challenge or an opportunity; I prefer to believe they are opportunities worthy of a state whose good people are fortunate to call Alabama their home.*

**Gov. Kay Ivey, inaugural address, January 14, 2019**



Gov. Ivey delivers her inaugural address in Montgomery January 14, 2019. Photo courtesy of the Governor's Office

Growing up in the small town of Camden in rural Wilcox County and working on her father's farm taught Kay Ivey to value hard work and living within one's means. After graduating from Auburn University in 1967, Ivey worked as a high school teacher and bank officer. She served as Reading Clerk of the Alabama House of Representatives under Speaker Joseph C. McCorquodale and was Assistant Director of the Alabama Development Office, where she worked to spur job creation and economic development across the state.

Throughout Ivey's political career, she has made history time and again. In 2002, she became the first Republican elected State Treasurer since Reconstruction. She was re-elected in 2006. She was elected Lieutenant Governor in 2010, becoming the first Republican woman to hold the office in Alabama's history, and in 2014 she was the first Republican Lieutenant Governor re-elected to office.

On April 10, 2017, Ivey was sworn in as the 54th Governor of the State of Alabama in the Old Senate Chamber in the Alabama State Capitol by Acting Chief Justice Lyn Stuart, and on November 6, 2018, she made history once again when she received a historic number of votes to become the first Republican woman elected to Governor in Alabama. She was also our state's first Lieutenant Governor to become Governor and go on to win an election for a full term as Governor. For more about Governor Kay Ivey, her staff and her administration, visit [www.governor.alabama.gov](http://www.governor.alabama.gov). ALM's conversation with Governor Ivey begins on the next page.



Gov. Ivey delivers her inaugural address in Montgomery January 14, 2019. Photo courtesy of the Governor's Office

# A conversation with Gov. Kay Ivey:

**You've been involved in state government for many years and are only the second woman to serve as Governor of Alabama in its nearly 200-year history. Currently, just over 15 percent of the State Legislature is female and less than 20 percent of Alabama's mayors are women. Why is it important for women to be active in government – both at the state and local levels?**

If a person – whether male, female, young or old – has a passion to make a difference, I would strongly encourage him or her to pursue public office. Being only Alabama's second female governor, I especially want that message to resonate with our women. Our country, our state and our communities need more good women to serve as elected officials. From Dr. Deborah Barnhart leading the U.S. Space and Rocket Center as CEO to Dr. Cathy Randall making the University of Alabama's Computer-Based Honors program a globally-recognized success – Alabama women are making great strides, and there's no reason they shouldn't be making those strides in public office.

**Thinking back over your many years of dedicated public service, who was your greatest inspiration and why?**

Governor Lurleen Wallace was a childhood hero of mine, and to this day, she remains my greatest inspiration. She was a woman before her time. She was

Alabama's first female governor and only the third in the nation. Think

about the significance of that – Alabama's governor was only our nation's third female governor. Governor Lurleen Wallace's legacy continues to prove that Alabama can be the state to spark change and be the model for the nation. Having the privilege of personally knowing her, I can honestly say that she can be an example to all Alabama women – no matter what they're pursuing – we can all have a lasting impact in our fields.

**What advice do you offer women who are considering running for office?**

For women considering a run for public office – on any level – get established in your career, so you can prove yourself as a leader, and then put your name on the ballot. Girls don't have to wait for the boys to ask them to the dance. If you want to go to the dance, you should go to the dance!

**As the person leading our state, what can you tell young people, particularly girls, about your experience as an elected official that you hope will encourage and/or inspire them?**

Because I speak from my personal experience, I know there is great joy in empowering the people where you serve. The dreams and visions of our young people, particularly our girls, can be the change we need in our state and our country. So, to those young people who have a dream for the future of Alabama and even of the world, don't be afraid of that dream. I assure



*Kay Ivey with Gov. Lurleen Wallace in 1967 when Ivey served as the first woman vice president of Auburn University's SGA. She was also the only woman in the trumpet section of the marching band and the only Auburn graduate to win five campus-wide elections in four years. Photo courtesy of the Governor's Office.*



*Kay Ivey at Gov. Lurleen Wallace's desk in the summer of 1967 when Ivey served on the staff of Alabama Girls State. On the back of the photo Ivey wrote: "This is as close as I'll ever get!" Photo courtesy of the Governor's Office.*

you that if you answer the high calling to run for public office, on any level, you can fulfill that vision.

**As a daughter of rural Alabama who was raised in Wilcox County, you have a unique understanding of the struggles facing rural Alabamians, including healthcare, broadband access, education and infrastructure. What is your vision for Rural Alabama and how are you working with state and local leaders to strengthen and support quality of life in rural Alabama?**

Rural Alabama will always hold a special place in my heart, and as governor, I have made it my mission to grow opportunities in all our 67 counties. The future of our state depends on our children, and since day one, I have made it my mission to make improvements to our education system. Beginning with a child's earliest years and continuing all the way to the workforce, it is imperative that we are preparing Alabama's students for today and tomorrow. Having a quality education can be every Alabamian's ticket to success. So, the success of rural Alabama begins with education, but it also means ensuring there is access to quality healthcare in all 67 counties and investing more in our aging infrastructure. There are real challenges facing rural Alabama, but we are looking to make real solutions. As governor, I will always be a champion for rural Alabama!

**What are some of the issues that are of greatest concern to you and our state leaders? What are your greatest concerns?**

Alabama has recently experienced significant momentum, but it certainly is not a secret that we face some serious challenges in our state. We have an aging infrastructure system, sorely neglected prisons and an education system, all which need improvements. Our country also has a very important census coming up in 2020, and it is absolutely imperative Alabama has maximum participation. These are just a few of the obstacles that we are looking to tackle, but it's also important to note that these are issues that didn't just arrive on our doorstep. Likewise, these problems will not go away in weeks or even months. I am confident, though, that if we work on them together, these challenges can be looked upon as tomorrow's accomplishments.

**As the second female governor in our state's history, what legacy do you hope to leave for future generations?**

When my time as governor comes to a close, my hope is that people remember the Ivey Administration as one that led Alabama to real change. I want people to remember that we weren't afraid of Alabama's pressing problems, but instead, that we faced them head on and overcame them. The Ivey Administration will be just the beginning of Alabama's brightest days.

**Tell us something about Kay Ivey that we wouldn't read in your bio.**

I could make a 16-second barrel race, and I know the difference between mountain oysters and seafood – although, I think many of you probably already knew that one. ■



*Kay Ivey, undated, courtesy of the Gov.'s Office*

*... my pathway to this spot was certainly not predetermined or even likely. After all, when I was growing up in my hometown of Camden, little girls simply didn't dream of growing up to one day be elected Governor. Alabama is a state where dreams do come true. Because in Alabama, anything is possible.*

*Gov. Kay Ivey, inaugural address, January 14, 2019*



*Gov. Kay Ivey, courtesy of the Gov.'s Office*

# Lurleen Wallace: Alabama's First Female Governor

*Fifty years ago, one of my childhood heroes, Governor Lurleen Wallace, was sworn in as the first woman governor in Alabama ... In her inaugural address, Governor Wallace called on the Alabama Legislature to, among other things, provide greater funding to build and improve our roads. I am very hopeful that 50 or 100 years from now, Governors will not have to include requests to improve our infrastructure. Today, I follow in Governor Lurleen Wallace's footsteps in many ways and make the same ask to the members of the Alabama Legislature.*

~ Gov. Kay Ivey, inaugural address, Jan. 14, 2019

Sixteen months after taking office as Alabama's first female Governor, Lurleen Wallace died of cancer at age 41. Born on September 19, 1926, in Tuscaloosa, she married George C. Wallace in 1943. When George was elected governor in 1963, she assumed the duties of first lady. After failing to convince the legislature to amend the constitution to allow governors to serve consecutive terms, George announced Lurleen's candidacy for governor in 1966. She won the Democratic primary with 54 percent of the vote and was sworn into office on January 16, 1967. Prior to her death, she successfully advocated to increase funding for the state's mental hospitals and to improve Alabama's natural and recreational facilities through a \$43 million bond issue that the Legislature passed in March and the voters approved in December. She also endorsed elder care reforms. For additional information on Governor Lurleen Wallace, visit [encyclopediaofalabama.org](http://encyclopediaofalabama.org) and [archives.alabama.gov](http://archives.alabama.gov).



*Gov. Lurleen Wallace turkey hunting. Photo courtesy of the Alabama Department of Archives and History.*

## Mayor Loxcil Tuck: Framing the Expectation that Women Should Lead

By Benjamin Goldman, City Attorney, Tarrant, Mulga, Cordova; President AAMA

Please don't tell my sisters, teachers or legal assistants (past or present) what I am about to share, but other than my mother and my wife, the woman who has shaped my life the most is Tarrant Mayor Loxcil Tuck. A couple of years ago, my oldest daughter interviewed Mayor Tuck and wrote a paper about her life. My daughter introduced her as "always trying to do good and overcoming every obstacle that comes her way." She is right. Mayor Tuck is a woman of faith, and at several turns along the way, she has asked me to remember that "all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28.

Mayor Tuck is a testament of what is good in our state.

At 85 years young (she would tell you so herself) and going stronger than ever in her fourth term as mayor, Mayor Tuck is a leader among leaders. She was born into a poor, but happy, family of 14 children. Married to the love of her life for nearly 60 years, she and her husband, Coach Gerald Tuck, have created a lasting legacy through their examples for their children and grandchildren. Mayor Tuck cared for her family while having a successful career in banking. In public service, she has had a career of firsts: first to found her city's Beautification Board, first woman elected to the Tarrant City Council, first woman elected Mayor of Tarrant and first woman elected President of the Jefferson County Mayors Association.

Mayor Tuck is an inspiration to me and to many. I have witnessed this first hand in the lives of my 10-and 12-year-old daughters who cannot remember life without her being a part of it. At about six-years-old, one of my daughters asked me if men could be elected as mayors. By her example, Mayor Tuck has framed the expectations of rising generations that women can and should take the lead. ■



*Ben Goldman with Mayor Loxcil Tuck, Tarrant*



# Q & A with **Marty Handlon** Mayor, Alabaster

*Located in Shelby County, Alabaster has a population of approximately 33,000. Mayor Handlon is a Certified Public Accountant with a Master's in Business Administration and more than 20 years' experience in accounting and financial management. She serves on the League's Executive Committee.*



*Mayor Handlon with members of the Alabaster Teen Council*

## **When were you first elected to office and why did you decide to run?**

I was elected mayor of Alabaster in October 2012 in a run-off with the three-term incumbent. I was active in the community and had worked for the city in 2006, so I felt I had a good idea of what our city lacked in accountability within day-to-day operations, as well as sound financial management for continued success in our growth and development. As an accountant, I have always been a behind-the-scenes worker-bee – and I've always been very comfortable there. But there comes a time when you are not happy with what your elected leaders are doing and you either step up or shut up. I felt like I had the skills and experience to offer and a willingness to try, so, after prayerful consideration, I stepped out of my comfort zone and ran for office.

Also, customer service is important to me in every industry, and I believe citizens are customers of government – they pay, through their contribution to the tax base, and they expect to receive a service and quality of life commensurate with their money. In the process of raising my family and being active in the community, I developed a passion for Alabaster's image to be recognized in a way that was reflective of the community it represents.

## **Who inspired you to become a public servant and pursue a leadership role in your community?**

I don't know if any one person inspired me. I worked in state government with the Department of Postsecondary Education early in my career and for the city later in my career, so I had many mentors along the way who inspired me in different aspects. My personality is geared towards problem solving, so anything I'm involved in is usually because I feel I can contribute in a positive way.

## **In addition to serving your municipality, do you have another full-time or part-time job? If so, what? If not, what did you do prior to being elected?**

I was self-employed as a Certified Public Accountant when I took office, and I wore both hats until my youngest graduated from college in 2017 and got a job. Since then, I have slowly gotten out of the public accounting business. I'm at an age where I can simplify my life and do a good job at those areas which are really important to me instead of a divided effort on many interesting things. Now my focus is limited to mayor, family and individual growth. My personality is happiest when I'm able to be "all in" on my responsibilities – it fits my work ethic – and too many responsibilities just add too much stress to life.

## **What skillsets and personal qualities are necessary to be effective in your role as an elected official?**

I feel like the most important aspect of being an effective mayor is communication – both listening and speaking – as well as empathy for citizens and employees and passion for what you are doing. It is truly a labor of love. The major responsibility of the mayor's office is day-to-day operations, so being a good manager and encourager for the employees is important. They need to feel good about the job they do. Another important aspect is relationship building. There are many opportunities to collaborate, so having good relationships with other cities and other government agencies is beneficial. We can do so much more together than we can alone.

## **How long have you been active with the Alabama League of Municipalities and why is your participation important – both to your community and the League?**

I've been on the League's Executive Committee since the beginning of my second term. I believe it helps me keep things in perspective because of the municipal diversity across the state. I've attended the League's annual convention each year since taking office. I love the round table discussions by population because I hear what other cities our size are doing – the good, bad and ugly. I believe our participation helps the League have a better understanding of the day-to-day issues in the various cities. You must be in it to really appreciate and understand the issues.

**What is the most challenging aspect of serving your citizens?**

From a personal aspect, it is forgetting what they wrote on Facebook community boards while providing excellent customer service. People seem to enjoy stirring the pot instead of calling city hall or their Council representative to find out the truth or details of an issue. We communicate in every method we can think of, but people still don't read it or come ask questions at City Hall or Council meetings. From a leadership aspect, it is balance with capital projects. We have so many needs but finite resources so it's important to make sure we are addressing things in priority order and for the greater good. Not everyone has the same interests, so priorities are going to be different depending on who you ask.

**What is the most rewarding?**

I don't think there is one thing which stands out above all others as most rewarding. It's a package deal. I really like problem solving, and there are plenty of those to go around. I love being able to educate our citizens about the "how and why" we do the things we do. I love to look at things and see if we can do it better – better and more efficient service. I love being part of the vision for our future. I've said it many times – I may have made more money in another job in my career, but I have not had near the amount of joy as I have had in this one. I love being part of a team that's pulling in the same direction.

**What is the most surprising thing you've learned about being an elected official?**

There is politics in ALL things. Growing up in Montgomery and working in Education, I thought I was fairly well rounded and worldly, but it turns out I was pretty naive. There have been some true disappointments in that reality.

**According to 2010 Census information, the number of women in Alabama is roughly equal to the number of men; yet, the number of women serving in elected office is much lower – only 15 to 30 percent depending on the office. Why do you think it's important for women to run for municipal office and what advice do you have for women who may be considering running for office?**

Municipal and County government allows you to see and experience firsthand and on a daily basis the impact of your decisions and leadership. Without trying to sound feminist, I believe women concentrate on getting things done. Generally, we communicate in more detail and welcome input from all levels to ensure we have the best answer. You can truly make a difference at the local government level without worrying about partisan politics – just doing the right things for the right reasons.

**Tell us about a program you were instrumental in implementing in your community and how it is benefiting your citizens.**

Something very important to me as soon as I took office was to establish a Teen Council. As a mother in the community, I knew we had many teenagers with lots of unproductive time on their hands, and I knew many who were making poor choices and developing bad habits. I wanted the opportunity to develop teen leaders who could organize and host positive events for their

peers in hopes of changing the negative trend. It has evolved over the last five years to be better each year. I hear many positive comments from teenagers and parents.

Internally, I formed a Leadership Team of department heads for one Alabaster, instead of siloed departments operating with concern only for their area of expertise. I believe it has greatly improved the way we serve our citizens.

**If you were awarded a \$1 million grant to use for the city any way you wanted, what would you do with it and why?**

I would put it in our parks. Improving the parks is the only place \$1 million would make a visible impact by itself. And, parks are a major contributor to the quality of life in our community. All our other needs are major capital projects with a much bigger price tag.

**Statewide, what do you think is the most critical issue facing municipalities and how can it be resolved?**

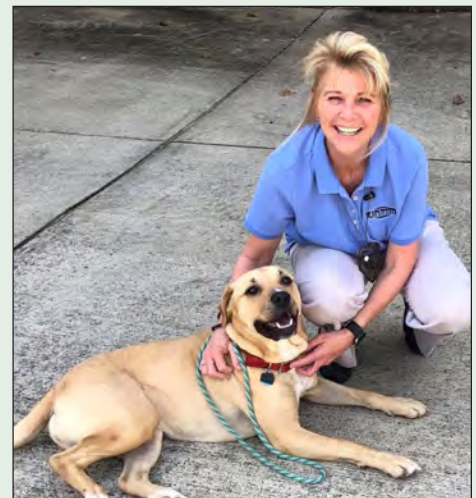
Besides infrastructure and roads? Truly, I think the most critical issue facing each city is balance in all things. Growth happens, but there is a fine line to balance and still maintain expected quality of life. Retail is a big factor because Alabama cities are so dependent on sales tax dollars, yet retail has to be supported by rooftops and Alabama's property tax is so low rooftops cost more for a municipality to serve than what the homestead produces in tax base. The retail developments pay for the services provided in the residential growth, such as necessary increases for public safety, roads, park and recreation programs and schools. The cities which have higher property taxes do so for the schools, but the municipality should still be safe, have good roads and other necessary public services. I have communicated to our Board of Education: We both have to be good before we can be great. We have to work together.

Many of our problems can only be resolved with money, and it is in short supply. It's no one's fault. Things and services cost more today, and we have outgrown our tax base.

**Is there anything else you'd like to share regarding your experience serving your community as a municipal official?**

It is truly a labor of love, and the joy is unexplainable. It will grow you in ways you would have never imagined. You have to be able to answer the tough questions about how and why and stand on the decisions made. But, if your love for mankind, those you serve and your community wanes, you need to be able to hand over the reigns for a fresh perspective from a new view. ■

*Mayor Handlon with her rescue, Lucy Lu*



# Q & A with **Sadie Britt** Councilwoman, Lincoln

*Located in Talladega County, Lincoln has a population of approximately 6,600. Councilwoman Britt has been in office since 1993. She was the first African American woman to serve as League President (2015-2016) and currently serves on the League's Executive Committee as well as the board of the Municipal Workers Compensation Fund, Inc. (MWCF).*



**When were you first elected to office and why did you decide to run?**

I was elected as councilmember in August 1996. My decision to run came as a result of my appointment to this position by then Mayor Andy Allred in January 1993. Upon the completion of my tenure as an appointed councilmember, I realized just how wonderful it felt being able to give service to the city I dearly loved.

**Who inspired you to become a public servant and pursue a leadership role in your community?**

It is difficult to pin-point any single individual who inspired me to become a public servant because I would miss some of the people whose shoulders I leaned on to stay involved while building a better community and city. The inspiration that I received from my parents lingers in my mind because in order to be an effective leader one must use hard working skills taught while growing up such as: tenacity, perseverance, honesty, integrity, tolerance and a great ear for listening.

**In addition to serving your municipality, do you have another full-time or part-time job? If so, what? If not, what did you do prior to being elected?**

I was an elementary school teacher prior to becoming a councilmember. I also served as a reading interventionist for Lincoln Elementary School for two years. I am now a tutor for elementary school children.

**How long have you been active with the Alabama League of Municipalities and why is your participation important – both to your community and the League?**

I have been actively involved with the League for 25 years. Participation is important because the League sponsors conventions, workshops, meetings as well as provides legal advice that our cities and communities need to become successful cities. I immediately became involved in the League's Certified Municipal Official (CMO) program when it was launched in 1996 and was part of the first graduating class to earn Emeritus Status – the highest CMO level – in December 2015. It's an excellent program for mayors and councilmembers. My involvement with the League has made me a much better informed and more effective municipal official and the educational components as well as the numerous opportunities to interact with my colleagues throughout the state provide many advantages. I have continually attended the League's Annual Conventions, leadership conferences and CMO training sessions, as well as NLC conventions and meetings. The League offers so many learning opportunities and provides such good information that you always look forward to the next course or meeting that's coming up. The courses keep you involved. (**Editor's note:** Councilwoman Britt served as League President from 2015-2016. Prior to being elected League President, she served as Vice President in 2014. In addition, she was Vice Chair of the League's Committee on State and Federal Legislation for two years and then Chair for two years. She had also previously served as the Vice Chair and then Chair of the Human Development Committee as well as several years on the League's Executive Committee, where she still serves. She also serves on the Board of Directors for the Municipal Workers Compensation Fund, Inc.)

**What is the most challenging aspect of serving your citizens? Most rewarding?**

The most challenging aspect of serving our citizens is conveying to them that not every request can happen as soon as they think

*continued on page 24*

# Q & A with **Leigh Dollar** Mayor, Guntersville

*Located in Marshall County, Guntersville has a population of approximately 8,500. Mayor Dollar is a Certified Public Accountant and the first female mayor to serve her city. She is the Vice Chair of the League's Committee on Community and Economic Development.*

## **When were you first elected to office and why did you decide to run?**

I was elected in 2012. I always knew I wanted to run for mayor since in high school. It was no secret to anyone in town. The incumbent mayor knew I wanted to run, and he decided he wasn't going to seek re-election, so I seized the opportunity.

## **Who inspired you to become a public servant and pursue a leadership role in your community?**

I have always been taught to give back to the community that raises you. My dad was mayor when I was born. I don't remember him being mayor, but I do remember him serving as city attorney all my growing up years. I was always interested in politics, especially at the local level, because my family was so involved.

## **In addition to serving your municipality, do you have another full-time or part-time job? If so, what? If not, what did you do prior to being elected?**

I am also a CPA and have an accounting firm a few blocks from City Hall. I continue to practice accounting while serving.

## **What skillsets and personal qualities are necessary to be effective in your role as an elected official?**

I think you must be a people-person and have passion for serving. A financial background has been very helpful to me because I didn't have to go through a learning curve associated with governmental accounting. You also must be able to switch gears very quickly because one minute you may be trying to bring in business and the next you may be dealing with drainage issues. There is never a dull moment.

## **How long have you been active with the Alabama League of Municipalities and why is your participation important – both to your community and the League?**

Six years. I think the education that we receive is imperative in operating a city as well as the relationships that we have with other cities all over the state. I have a huge network of people that I can call on for various things. For the League, it's important because we are stronger as one unified voice. As with anything, the more you put in, the more you get out. It takes involvement for it to be beneficial.

## **What is the most challenging aspect of serving your citizens? What is the most rewarding?**

Not being able to fix their problem or help them. The most rewarding is helping people and watching my community grow.

## **What is the most surprising thing you've learned about being an elected official?**

The amount of time and relationships/interactions that you have with federal and state elected officials. Often in small communities, you don't think you will have to work with them or that they can help. They are so important in helping accomplish things, even in small cities.

## **According to 2010 Census information, the number of women in Alabama is roughly equal to the number of men; yet, the number of women serving in elected office is much lower – only 15 to 30 percent depending on the office. Why do you think it's important for women to run for municipal office and what advice do you have for women who may be considering running for office?**

I think it's important for all people to run for office. Diversity is so important, so all perspectives are considered. I tell anyone thinking of running for office to go for it! Put yourself out there, even though it's not easy.



*continued on page 23*

# Q & A with Jennifer Williams Smith

## Councilwoman, Jasper

*Located in Walker County, Jasper has a population of approximately 13,600. Councilwoman Williams Smith was elected in 2012 as the second woman to serve on the Jasper City Council. She is the former Aquatics Director/ Director of Leisure Activities for the City and the owner and marketing consultant for Just Face It Alabama. She is the Vice Chair of the League's Committee on Human Development.*

### **When were you first elected to office and why did you decide to run?**

November 2012. I was serving as the city's Director of Leisure Activities when my daughter was diagnosed with a rare autoimmune disease, Juvenile Dermatomyositis. As a single mom, the ability to work full-time away from home was not an option. Running for Council offered me an opportunity to remain engaged in my community, to play an important leadership role and the flexibility of part-time work. (It also allowed my family to remain on the same insurance plan. With a monthly infusion running \$40K, paying 100% of the premium was a blessing nonetheless.)

I also understood how influential and impactful the office could be from one of my mentors, Lee Swan. During Lee's 24 years of service, he was a strong advocate for the importance of parks, ballfields and quality public spaces accessible to all families in our community. As a city employee, a citizen, a member of his district and his friend, I understood that the position could be one of valuable and authentic service. Lee shared a broad and inclusive vision of what it means to build up our community. I knew from his example that I could work on real issues with tangible benefits and positive impact for our City.

### **Who inspired you to become a public servant and pursue a leadership role in your community?**

Right off the bat, I would say my grandmother, Nell Martin, inspired me to be a leader in my community. From an early age, she sat me down at her kitchen table and taught me the importance of knowing my neighbors, of opening up and holding my own in crucial conversations and of being willing to stand up for my opinions. Plenty of local leaders sought her counsel and her endorsement. I learned early on to get out into the community, to understand that every community has its elders and to be prepared to listen to them. My grandmother definitely instilled in me that the right to vote was hard won, that civic engagement was required and that it takes strength to hold your own in community conversations. I also benefitted from living in a moment when, locally, women began to step into traditionally male-dominated roles. I saw Sandi Sudduth become the first woman to be elected to our Council. Connie Rowe took the helm as our first female Chief of Police – she is now serving in the Alabama Legislature. Seeing them step into those roles, to take risks, to seek more powerful positions, gave me confidence.

### **In addition to serving your municipality, do you have another full-time or part-time job? If so, what? If not, what did you do prior to being elected?**

In addition to serving my municipality, I own a small boutique marketing firm, Just Face It Alabama. We specialize in local social media training, consultations and analysis to help small businesses and municipalities understand how to grow their brands and their business relationships through social platforms. In smaller cities and towns, we have strong traditions of storytelling, sharing news and building relationships. Often, we need help understanding how to use emerging technologies to carry on those traditions. I love consulting and training because I have the opportunity to show others how simple new technology can be to use. With the right images, the right stories, a few easy hashtags, a town or business can grow relationships without a big budget. Whether showing seniors how to use their smart phones to stay connected with friends and family or helping a local non-profit engage new constituents, I enjoy that my business helps people share and promote what they love.

### **What skillsets and personal qualities are necessary to be effective in your role as an elected official?**

Before running for office, I had an operational perspective as a city employee. I thought I knew a good bit about how things worked. Serving, I've come to understand how important it is to be open to learning, to be willing to hear diverse perspectives,

*continued next page*



to recognize that it takes a range of different skills to lead our City. Professionally, I bring a strong marketing and social media expertise to our Council. I also bring a love of community outreach and a willingness to be visible, to be a face for and promoter of the positive in my City.

I also think, as a woman, that I bring the value of a woman's perspective on the issues that shape my district. I understand something about what it means to be a caregiver, to be an emotional anchor, to be responsible for my extended family. That understanding and empathy helps me to better represent women and families in my district.

Communication and general leadership skills are important in elected office, but I also think it is worth acknowledging that many different kinds of people can be community leaders. My hope is that the children in my district, especially the girls, see that you can be yourself and lead. You can be younger than your peers in office. You can be radically different from the other candidates. There is strength in offering a fresh voice, relating to a broader base, helping your community to embrace change and new approaches to leadership.

**How long have you been active with the Alabama League of Municipalities and why is your participation important – both to your community and the League?**

Taking the initiative to participate in the League was one of my best decisions as an elected official. Early on it offered me an introductory overview of all the aspects of municipal government that were new to me. From protocols and ordinances to budgets and legislative advocacy, I wanted to be sure I understood the leadership environment and that I was prepared for my office. The League helped me master the basics of local government and offered me a structured way to grow a political network and access to expertise that continues to benefit my community.

Through serving on the League's Human Development Policy Committee, I had access to statewide thought leaders and best practices for important issues impacting my community. I developed a strong network of peers in other municipalities. When my community faces a challenge, I now have access to both content experts and other leaders with practical experience who can provide guidance. The League expands the resources available to my community and provides a platform to develop friendships across the state with people who are working to solve similar problems.

I think the legislative dinners the League convenes each year really help grow exposure for my community. Because we have the opportunity to get to know our representatives, we have a stronger chance that they will listen to the needs and voices of our local communities. Overall, the League has helped me grow my ability to competently and professionally advocate and influence policy that benefits our citizens.

**What is the most challenging aspect of serving your citizens?**

For me, the most challenging aspect of serving our citizens is that our priorities and needs can be so different. I have to work hard to be out in my district, to really try to understand where we have shared priorities. Time and resources can be limited. It's challenging to make peace with some of those limitations.



**What is the most rewarding?** Far too many to just name one.

**What is the most surprising thing you've learned about being an elected official?**

I think what's most surprised me is how running for office makes you, in the minds of your neighbors, a "politician" or a "good old boy." I've enjoyed trying to change that perspective. I'll never be a "good old boy". I'll never be a "good old girl". What I will be is an optimistic woman who is brave enough to serve my community; who is prepared and capable to do so; and who is willing to shake off all the stereotypes that can come with that service.

**According to 2010 Census information, the number of women in Alabama is roughly equal to the number of men; yet, the number of women serving in elected office is much lower – only 15 to 30 percent depending on the office. Why do you think it's important for women to run for municipal office and what advice do you have for women who may be considering running for office?**

In Jasper, 51% of us are women. Our median age is 41. Many of us, like me, grew up here seeing men in leadership positions. Women could play important, but subordinate roles. Our teachers were women, but our principals were men. Our nurses were women, but our doctors were men. We were taught that we could be anything we aspired to be, but we saw that adage play out far better economically and politically for the boys and the men. Our children need to see us lead in all sorts of settings. They need our perspective and influence as elected community leaders. We face challenges politically and locally that require our unique voices and perspectives as women.

**Tell us about a program you were instrumental in implementing in your community and how it is benefiting your citizens.**

I love being a part of visioning, creating and inspiring concrete

change in my city. In 2014, I had the opportunity to hear Mary Helmer and Sidney Hoover speak on Main Street Alabama and Alabama Communities of Excellence. I remember being excited that women were a key part of these concepts for improving our cities and towns. What was even more exciting was immediately joining the network of downtowns, of working with others to evolve those concepts into plans, plans into actions. Eventually, that network became Jasper Main Street, actual brick and mortar progress, a revitalization of our downtown economy, our Main Street. Our residents now have a thriving downtown, where you can shop, grab a coffee, have dinner or a beer with friends. Seeing our Main Street active, the positive economic impact on surrounding property values, the opportunity for successful local entrepreneurs to grow businesses amazes me.

Equally, I have enjoyed being part of policy change that has benefitted our residents, especially ordinances that are improving our City's ability to regulate the quality of available rental housing in our community.

**If you were awarded a \$1 million grant to use for the city any way you wanted, what would you do with it and why?**

If I had a \$1 million grant at my discretion, I would establish, with support from local leaders and residents, a Neighborhood Enhancement and Home Ownership program. I would love for us to have the opportunity to invest in our local housing stock, to upgrade aging homes and to improve access to owning quality homes. Too many residents in my district face challenges in affording upgrades to their homes, upgrades that could improve the quality and value of their surrounding neighborhood. I would love to be part of securing funds to update, weatherize and upgrade a neighborhood.

**Statewide, what do you think is the most critical issue facing municipalities and how can it be resolved?**

I think our most critical issue is how we can stop the flow of opioids, opioid addiction and opioid deaths in our state. For me, this one is raw, emotionally resonant. It hits far too close to home. I understand directly what it means to lose a family member to this crisis. It is difficult to calculate the amount of pain and suffering we are experiencing across our state from this issue. I cannot claim to know how to resolve it. As we consider our approaches to mental healthcare across the state, the over prescription of opioids by providers, the cost of effective long-term care, this one seems daunting. I do know that it will take research, creativity, collaboration across sectors, innovation and a political will to keep caring, to care like the lives of our families depend upon it. They do.

**Is there anything else you'd like to share regarding your experience serving your community as a municipal official?**

I have learned that I am a leader, a decision-maker and a powerful voice and force at the table. I want more young people to feel that way. Key local decisions can shape the next 30 years. I want to see younger people participating in those decisions. I think we have an obligation to share what is great about leading locally, to avoid the easy jump to negativity and complaint, to focus on how we can better love and serve our communities. ■

# Leigh Dollar

continued from page 20

**Tell us about a program you were instrumental in implementing in your community and how it is benefiting your citizens.**

My predecessor began Guntersville's Mayor's Youth Council, which is an outstanding partnership between our schools and our community. I'm extremely proud of our Youth Council and what we're achieving together. This is truly a unique and beneficial stakeholder program that teaches young people about local government and civic responsibility while building tomorrow's leaders! I encourage every municipality to consider adding some sort of youth component to their government structure.

**If you were awarded a \$1 million grant to use for the city any way you wanted, what would you do with it and why?**

I would put the money into our rec department to upgrade our facilities.

**Statewide, what do you think is the most critical issue facing municipalities and how can it be resolved?**

I think infrastructure is one of the most critical issues due to the age of the infrastructure and the cost to maintain/repair. I think as a state that we have to look at funding options that will allow us to maintain what we have in addition to allowing for future growth.

**Is there anything else you'd like to share regarding your experience serving your community as a municipal official?**

I think it's the greatest honor to serve your community. ■



# Sadie Britt

continued from page 19



it can. Getting the citizens to understand requests are taken seriously and, in time, many desires and requests may happen. The most rewarding is feedback from the citizens conveying to you that you are doing a great job.

### What is the most surprising thing you've learned about being an elected official?

The most surprising thing I learned is the joy of working for a city without depending on this work for a large income.

### Tell us about a program you were instrumental in implementing in your community and how it is benefiting your citizens.

I have been heavily involved in many quality of life projects for our city, including our new Lincoln City Hall/Fire Station, Lincoln Library, Lincoln Recreational Parks and the Blue Eye Creek Walking Trail/and Handicap Fishing Pavilion. (**Editor's note:** Councilwoman Britt served as the City's Library Liaison for many years. On July 21, 2014, Lincoln opened its spacious 7500 square foot modernized library featuring vibrant colors, a collection of over 16,500 books, 15 computers available to the public, comfortable reading chairs, a beautiful children's area with a large mural painted by a local artist and a wall featuring bags of early childhood learning materials dubbed Sadie's Satchels in honor of Sadie Britt for her "unwavering dedication and devotion to The Lincoln Public Library.")

### If you were awarded a \$1 million grant to use for the city any way you wanted, what would you do with it and why?

A \$1 million grant would be used to build a state of the art community center with a walking track for senior citizens, provisions for youth activities and senior citizens programs as well as space for conventions and meetings.

### Is there anything else you'd like to share regarding your experience serving your community as a municipal official?

I have had a wonderful experience being involved in the decision making for my city. Being a part of such an important process is very rewarding. ■



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# Tuscaloosa: Majority Female Council First in City's History



Left to Right: Councilwomen  
Phyllis Wade Odom,  
Sonya McKinstry, Cynthia Almond  
Raevan Howard

*To effectively serve, the Council must reflect a diversity of ideas and experiences. I am proud that Tuscaloosa's elected officials not only demonstrate tremendous leadership, but bring a voice on perspectives too often lost in government. ~ Mayor and ALM Past President Walt Maddox*

**Phyllis Wade Odom** was born in Big Cove (Madison County), Alabama, the sixth of seven children to Mr. Robert T. Wade and the late Mrs. Ella J. Collier Wade. After moving to Tuscaloosa with her family at the age of three, she was educated in the Tuscaloosa public school system. A 1968 graduate of Druid High School, Mrs. Odom furthered her education at Stillman College, receiving a bachelor's degree in Business Administration in 1972. While at Stillman, she met and married her husband of 42 years, the late Councilor Burrell G. Odom of Mobile, Alabama. Together they had four children and seven grandchildren. Mrs. Odom retired from Gulf States Paper Corporation, now known as the Westervelt Company, after 33 years of service. She is an active member of the Weeping Mary Missionary Baptist Church, the Stillman College Alumni Association and the Metro-Tuscaloosa Optimist Club.

**Sonya Yvette McKinstry** was born and raised in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Her parents are Julia and Frederick Harris and Sidney and Doris Simmons. Mrs. McKinstry is a product of the Tuscaloosa City School System. She is co-owner of McKinstry Banquet Hall and also an event planner. She is currently employed with the Administrative Office of Courts, where she has been a Judicial Assistant for over 12 years. She is a member of Beulah Missionary Baptist Church in Tuscaloosa where she serves on numerous auxiliaries. She has been a strong advocate for her district in the past and looks forward to serving her second term. She is married to Darryl McKinstry, and they have six children and three grandchildren.

**Cynthia Almond** was born and raised in Tuscaloosa. She graduated from Central High School and then attended Vanderbilt University. She received a Bachelor of Arts from The University of Alabama, majoring in History and minoring in Spanish, and she also received her Juris Doctor from The University of Alabama School of Law. Ms. Almond is in the private practice of law where she concentrates in estate planning and probate, business law, and real estate. She also owns a title company, Capitol Park Title. She is serving her 4th term on the Tuscaloosa City Council, where she serves as the as President Pro Tem. She is a graduate of Leadership Alabama and currently serves on the Boards of the West Alabama Regional Commission (Vice-Chair), Capstone Health Services Foundation, FNB of Central Alabama, Tuscaloosa County Tax Board, and as a Sunday School teacher at First United Methodist Church.

**Raevan Howard** was born in Tuscaloosa, Alabama to former City Councilor Bobby Howard and Kim Howard. She graduated from Central High School in 2006 and in 2014 received a bachelor's degree in social work from the University of Alabama. Currently, she is pursuing a graduate degree in marriage and family counseling. She enjoys volunteering with nonprofit agencies such as the American Red Cross. Ms. Howard serves on the Board of Trustees for Culver Road Church where she is a Sunday school teacher and has been a member since birth. She is the proud mother of three children, Hillary, Malia and Marcus, who are students in Tuscaloosa City Schools. This is her first term.



# Congresswoman Terri Sewell (D -7th District)

Congresswoman Terri A. Sewell is in her fourth term representing Alabama's 7th Congressional District. She is one of the first women elected to Congress from Alabama in her own right and is the first black woman to ever serve in the Alabama Congressional delegation. She sits on the exclusive House Ways and Means Committee and the distinguished House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence charged with the oversight of our national security and is the Ranking Member on the Subcommittee on the Department of Defense Intelligence and Overhead Architecture.

Congresswoman Sewell is a member of the Congressional Black Caucus and is Vice Chair of the New Democrat Coalition. She is also Co-Chair of the newly formed Voting Rights Caucus. As the Member of Congress representing Alabama's civil rights district, Congresswoman Sewell has been a passionate champion for recognizing and honoring the sacrifices of those freedom fighters who served as powerful agents of change. She was honored that her first piece of successful legislation recognized the "Four Little Girls" who tragically lost their lives during the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in 1963.

Prior to her election in 2010, Congresswoman Sewell was the first black woman partner in the Birmingham law office of Maynard, Cooper & Gale, P.C., where she distinguished herself as one of the only black public finance lawyers in the State of Alabama. A proud product of Alabama's rural Black Belt, Congresswoman Sewell was the first black valedictorian of Selma High School. She is an honors graduate of Princeton University and Oxford University and received her law degree from Harvard Law School. Congresswoman Sewell is a Silver Star and boule member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. She is the daughter of retired Coach Andrew A. Sewell of Selma and retired librarian Nancy Gardner Sewell, Selma's first black City Councilwoman, the 18th South Eastern Regional Director and former Supreme Grammateus of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. ■

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# Congresswoman Martha Roby

(R -2nd District)



**You began your public service by serving on the Montgomery City Council following Councilwoman and ALM past President Alice Reynold’s retirement. Why did you decide to run for elected office and what led you to run for Congress?**

Throughout our marriage, my husband Riley and I have made it a top priority to give back to the community and state that has given so much to our family. Following Councilwoman Reynold’s retirement, I believed I could make a difference in service to the City of Montgomery and our friends and neighbors in our hometown. Fast forward a couple of years, Riley and I had two young children, and we were disheartened by the direction our country was heading under an administration that pushed a big government agenda. As a mother, I wanted to have a seat at the table to promote policies that impact future generations for the better. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to accomplish some important work in Congress, and I look forward to continuing these efforts during the 116th Congress.

**Who inspired you to become a public servant and pursue a leadership role in your community and ultimately in Congress?**

I was blessed to be born into a family with supportive parents who always told my siblings and me that we could be whatever we wanted to be. Their guidance inspired me to set goals and work tirelessly to achieve them, and I will always be grateful for the example they set for our family. I have family members who have been dedicated public servants. By their example and with their encouragement, I also decided to run for elected office.

**What skillsets and personal qualities are necessary to be effective as a congressional leader?**

As a member of Congress, my guiding principle is that Alabama always comes first. At the end of the day, seats in Congress belong to the voters in our respective districts. This seat belongs to the people who live and work in Alabama’s Second District, and each day, I strive to be the best representative of our shared priorities that I can be.

To be an effective leader, you have to be willing to listen more than you speak. This is especially true for members of Congress as we work for the voters who trust us to represent them. That’s why I make it a priority to use time I am not in Washington voting to travel across Alabama’s Second District to have conversations with the people I represent. Hearing directly from my constituents enables me to be a much better representative for their priorities and concerns.

**What accomplishment are you most proud of since first being elected to Congress?**

I was first elected to Congress during a time when our military faced damaging cuts due to sequestration. Throughout my tenure in the House, I have been proud to serve as a vocal advocate for proper military funding, and I am glad that we have reversed course and begun to rebuild our military. For the first time in a decade, we have fully funded our military on time. It is imperative that we equip our men and women in uniform with everything they need when we send them into harm’s way. Alabama’s Second District has a large military footprint with Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base and Fort Rucker, and I will continue to support measures to bolster our national security and ensure that their critical missions continue for years to come.

During my time in Congress, I have made it one of my top priorities to improve care for our nation’s veterans. It is no secret that the Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System often falls short of delivering quality care, and I am proud of some steps we’ve taken to fix a handful of issues. A lot of work remains to be done on that front, and I will remain actively engaged until we get it right. Last, but certainly not least, I have had the opportunity to vote in favor of two farm bills, and the 2018 farm bill was signed into law recently. I consider it one of my greatest responsibilities in Congress to advocate for smart agriculture policy on behalf of Alabama’s farmers, and I will continue to work to deliver results for these hardworking men and women who contribute so much to our state’s economy.

**According to the 2010 Census information, the number of women in Alabama is roughly equal to the number of men, yet the number of women serving in elected office is much lower – only 15 to 30 percent depending on the office. There have literally been only a handful of women in Alabama, including yourself, to serve in Congress. Why do you think it’s important for women to run for office and what advice do you have for women who may be considering running for office?**

As I’ve said many times over the years, all issues are “women’s issues.” From defense and national security to the economy and health care, women have unique perspective, and I believe it’s extremely important that we have a seat at the table in discussing all of these issues. That’s why throughout my time in Congress I have encouraged other women across the country to run for elected office and supported them in this endeavor.

It’s no secret that being a working mom comes with quite a few challenges, but it is possible to do both. You can be a mother and pursue a job or elected office you love – you just have to be willing to ask for help sometimes. My husband Riley and I are a great team, but we could not do this alone. We’re very blessed to have a network of supportive family and friends who will help us when we need it, and for that we’re both tremendously grateful. ■

# Women Serving in the Alabama Legislature

Currently, out of 140 members, 22 are women – 16 percent of the body.  
Four women serve in the Senate; 18 serve in the House.



## Alabama Senate

### **Alabama Senate members left to right:**

*Sen. Malika Sanders-Fortier (D-Selma), Sen. Vivian Figures (D-Mobile) and Sen. Linda Coleman-Madison (D-Birmingham).*

### **Not pictured:**

*Sen. Priscilla Dunn (D-Bessemer)*

### **Municipal Service:**

*Sen. Figures served on the Mobile City Council from 1993-1997 and Sen. Coleman-Madison served on the Birmingham City Council from 2002-2006.*



## Alabama House

### **Top picture left to right:**

*Rep. Tashina Morris (D-Montgomery), Rep. Rolanda Hollis (D-Birmingham), Rep. Merika Coleman (D-Pleasant Grove), Rep. Louise Alexander (D-Bessemer).*

### **Bottom picture left to right:**

*Rep. Mary Moore (D-Birmingham), Rep. April Weaver (R-Brierfield), Rep. Connie Rowe (R-Jasper), Rep. Debbie Wood (R-Valley), Rep. Margie Wilcox (R-Mobile), Rep. Terri Collins (R-Decatur), Rep. Adline Clarke (D-Mobile), Rep. Becky Nordgren (R-Gadsden), Rep. Juandalynn Givan (D-Birmingham), Rep. Barbara Drummond (D-Mobile).*

### **Not pictured:**

*Rep. Barbara Boyd (D-Anniston), Rep. Laura Hall (D-Huntsville), Rep. Ginny Shaver (R-Leesburg), Rep. Pebblin Warren (D-Tuskegee).*



### **Municipal Service:**

*Rep. Alexander served on the Bessemer City Council; Rep. Coleman was Director of Community and Economic Development for the City of Bessemer; Rep. Rowe was the first female Police Chief for the City of Jasper; and Rep. Shaver was the former Town Clerk of Leesburg and Administrative Labor Supervisor and Assistant City Clerk for the City of Gadsden.*

# Municipal Officials Work with The Women's Fund to Address Poverty in Shelby County



THE WOMEN'S FUND  
of GREATER BIRMINGHAM

**M**ix two determined local government leaders, an innovative philanthropic foundation and a host of partners equally committed to building economic security for families and you get a recipe for success.

Backed by funding from The Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham, Mayor Hollie Cost of Montevallo and Councilmember Bridgette Jordan-Smith of Vincent are leading a group of multi-sector organizations changing how Shelby County serves its most vulnerable population: women and their children.

Shelby County is the most affluent county in the state of Alabama, yet approximately 1 in 5 single women with children live below the poverty line. Thrive Together Shelby County and its two-generation (2Gen) approach is changing this. Inspired by the Aspen Institute's research, 2Gen is a national, research-informed model that intentionally integrates and aligns often-

isolated services for children and adults simultaneously in ways that break the cycle of poverty for the entire family. 2Gen helps children and families get the education and workforce training, social supports like parenting skills, and health care needed to create a legacy of economic stability and overall well-being that passes from one generation to the next. By removing unnecessary silos and integrating antipoverty programs, streamlining services and working across generations, 2Gen efforts are informed by and make more sense for children and families. 2Gen ensures programs meant to empower children and families are equitable in their offerings and availability and are rigorously measured to confirm they work.

"Our residents and local nonprofits do a wonderful job of donating food, volunteering to help others and responding to immediate critical needs," Mayor Hollie Cost of Montevallo said. "But historically, we have missed the mark in offering sustainable solutions that serve to elevate residents equitably. This is why we were so interested partnering with The Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham to bring 2Gen to our community."

The City of Montevallo is one of 19 members of Thrive Together Shelby County, a 2Gen collaborative network providing seamless, wraparound services to low-income women and their families with the goal of ending generational poverty. Thrive Together organizations include community colleges, public and private job training initiatives and social services.

Bridgette Jordan-Smith, councilmember with the City of Vincent, said Thrive Together will open doors for many Shelby County residents as well the city itself. "It extends our services and reach well beyond our city border," she said. "Our residents will have access to a wider variety of opportunities and Vincent has been able to solidify its relationship with some incredible partners."

Thrive Together Shelby County is one of three collaboratives to grow out of an 18-month strategic funding initiative by The Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham targeting resources and support to public and private organizations committed to improving service delivery to disrupt poverty. Similar models operate in Jefferson and Walker County.

"Since 1996 The Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham has utilized strategy-based philanthropy as a tool to accelerate economic opportunity for women," said Melanie R. Bridgeforth, President & CEO of The Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham. "Our investment in Shelby County is about transforming systems to disrupt cycles of poverty and it demonstrates the value-add of public and private sectors coming together to solve social problems. This work is spurred by investments from foundations and corporations in addition to public funding partners like the Shelby County Commission."

*continued on page 45*











*Vincent Councilwoman Bridgette Jordan-Smith (left) and Montevallo Mayor Hollie Cost (right) are working with The Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham to find sustainable solutions to address poverty in Shelby County where approximately 1 in 5 single women with children live below the poverty line despite Shelby County being the most affluent county in the state.*

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# Saving a Rural Alabama Community Through Tenacity, Teamwork and Servant Leadership



*Editor's note: The Alabama League of Municipalities launched Live Locally Alabama in January 2018 – a grassroots campaign to encourage civic engagement, instill community pride and highlight the crucial role municipal government plays in the daily lives of Alabama's citizens. As part of this campaign, we will include a Live Locally Alabama feature in each issue of the Journal highlighting important community topics and quality of life issues that will help municipal officials and employees improve their cities and towns for the people they serve. For additional information on this campaign, visit [livelocallyalabama.org](http://livelocallyalabama.org).*

**W**hen the City of York lost its only grocery store in 2015, daily existence became an immediate challenge. Located in western Alabama's Sumter County, this rural Black Belt community of approximately 2,300 depended on its Piggly Wiggly not only as its source for the most basic necessities but as a major economic driver to ensure the city's vitality. Mayor Gena Robbins, a York native who was first elected to the part-time mayor's position in 2012, inherited a bleak financial outlook when she took office. With an aging and declining population, many residents were concerned about the city's stability. When the unexpected happened and their Piggly Wiggly closed with no notice to city leaders, she was tested in ways she'd not imagined. Finding a solution to an epic challenge while working full time in a different city required tenacity, teamwork and the type of servant leadership that originates from a profound heritage of community commitment and pride – as well as an unconditional love of people and place. Ultimately, these factors proved to be a life-sustaining force for York, Alabama – and a lesson for rural communities throughout the state. Below is York's inspiring story told by Mayor Gena Robbins, who is also a member of the Alabama League of Municipalities' Executive Committee. Hers is a journey none want to travel but one that is quickly becoming a reality in rural America.

## What is the history behind York's Piggly Wiggly?

The Piggly Wiggly has been a cornerstone business in York for as long as I can remember. It was the surviving grocery store from the peak of three in the city and the only grocery store servicing York when it closed in December 2015. The Piggly Wiggly, or that grocery store location, was always a local family-run business for at least 70 years under husband and wife team management. In 2011, the Piggly Wiggly was sold from its historic local family ownership into new ownership. The city's last remaining grocery store ended up with two ownership components consisting of a longtime York family trust owning the land and building and another non-local individual as owner of the Piggly Wiggly franchise and internal store equipment (shelving, coolers, freezers, cash registers, etc.). The Piggly Wiggly franchise owner closed the grocery store in December 2015.

## Why did it close?

It is my understanding that the Piggly Wiggly franchise owner, who lived several states away, did not want to continue long distance management of the store.

*York's Piggly Wiggly opened under new ownership in October 2018. Photo courtesy of Brad Robinson*



### What steps were taken to bring it back?

The City was caught completely off guard by the closing of the Piggly Wiggly, our largest sales tax producing business.

I heard through the community grape vine that the grocery store was closing the middle of December 2015; I just couldn't believe it. The store franchise owner had not contacted me with information that it was going to close. Upon confirmation that the store was indeed closing, I immediately called the building owner and he was just as surprised as me to hear of the closing; he had not been told either.

This background information on the closing is important because it did not allow us the time or opportunity to work with the franchise owner on a possible solution for him to keep the grocery store open or to begin the timely recruitment of a new owner to keep the doors open. From December 2015 through February 2018, the property owner and I, along with several other people, immediately began making phone calls and meeting with prospective grocers from chain stores to private grocery store owners. Every effort was made to recruit a grocery store owner; however, we kept running into the same problematic issues: the larger branded grocers were not impressed with our projected revenue "numbers" and private, "Mom and Pop" prospects could not meet the financial requirements to fund the project. Everyone wanted a food desert grant to pay for most of the project cost, but that was just not an option with our applicants. The Sumter County Industrial Board decided to apply for a Delta Regional

Authority (DRA) grant to purchase the property and then lease the grocery store. However, the DRA grant was not applicable because we couldn't secure a Letter of Intent from anyone to commit to opening a full-service grocery store. The commitment of a full-service grocery store was important because the family that owned the building only wanted to sell to a buyer who planned to open a full time, full service grocery store.

***We could not afford to lose one dime of the existing income to the city or we would suffer having expenses greater than what we took in – everything had to keep spinning and be constantly monitored.***

**What was the impact on your community during the time York was without a grocery store? Where did people get needed supplies; how did the loss of tax revenue affect the municipal budget; were any key municipal projects affected or canceled?**

When the all-new 2012 administration took office, we inherited tremendous outstanding invoice debt contractual/ bond debt, safety/health/sanitation fines, failing infrastructure and equipment needs. We were strongly advised many times to declare bankruptcy. I, along with the City Council, did not want to declare bankruptcy and felt it would be best to follow a very tight and restrictive financial plan formulated by our city's accounting firm. An item or service not required by law for a municipality was evaluated as a cost to keep, not keep, or to determine if a service price adjustment was needed. As a small rural community with a population of 2,300, the success of the city's financial plan was dependent upon no losses in our revenue sources. We could not afford to lose one dime of the existing income to the city or we would suffer having expenses greater than what we took in – everything had to keep spinning and be constantly monitored.

In the fall of 2015, the City of York's revenue losses from an accumulation of business and industry closures; the county high school consolidation and relocation out of York; population loss; growth of online consumer retail sales; non-local retail sales; increased city expenditures on equipment/building/infrastructure needs; loss of jobs and a declining workforce as well as just a general overall loss in city revenue forced the closure of our police department and dispatcher service for nine weeks to allow for a growth in the city's cash flow. Our police officers were placed on furlough with insurance; however, our five-member dispatcher service was permanently dissolved and most of our city staff was cut to 32 hours per week.

This was a dark time for us.

In November 2015, the police department was activated again, we contacted with our neighboring county for dispatcher services and the staff went back to full time hours.

The loss of York's grocery store in December 2015 brought us to our knees.

While citizens were still coming to grips with having so much that "use to be" in York gone or changing, and really feeling the loss of revenue for the city, Piggly Wiggly closed. If your





community has never suffered the loss of its only grocery store, particularly if you are in Alabama's rural Black Belt, I will tell you it's a *horrible* circumstance. We are a community consisting mostly of senior-aged adults, single mothers and unemployed people, with the majority on a low fixed income. We have health issues that require fresh meats, vegetables and fruits, not just processed foods. We have transportation challenges, and many do not have the ability or means to ever consider leaving York for a larger metropolitan area.

The closure of the grocery store meant the loss of fresh foods and limited food selections, with no transportation for many to get to our neighboring cities to purchase food. The closest grocery store was now 13 miles away in Livingston. People in York with no transportation began catching rides to neighboring grocery stores – and in some cases, paying shameful amounts of money to be driven there by “friends”.

The city stepped in and provided transportation with our city bus to Livingston three days a week. It was a hard hit to the city's core to suffer the loss of the grocery store, but to take money from our shrinking general fund to transport citizens for what would be right at three years to purchase food and supplies that provided sales tax revenue to neighboring cities, was a bitter pill to swallow. The governing body of the city absolutely wanted to do this for our citizens – it was the citizens' money and it was being put to the best use to help them – but, as the mayor looking at it from where I was sitting, it broke my heart.

***I was warned by two high revenue Main Street businesses that if our grocery store was not reopened by December 2018, they would close.***

The closure of the grocery store and the loss of its accompanying sales tax revenue revealed to city officials just how much foot traffic the grocery store contributed to customer sales at the other businesses in York. The revenue from sister businesses began dropping quickly when consumers bought the additional items they needed where they bought groceries. I was warned by two high revenue Main Street businesses that if our grocery store was not reopened by December 2018, they would close. In addition, services and events citizens were accustomed to enjoying had to be reduced or stopped due to lack of financial resources. Our summer activity programs for youth were reduced, festival activities were reduced, as was the decorating of our downtown area. Grass cutting and city property grooming were stretched to almost half of normal maintenance. City repairs that were not critical to safety, health, sanitation or required by law were stretched or stopped all together.

The morale of our citizens was at its lowest and was matched only by the lowest drop ever in our city revenue.

The one positive note during our escalating crisis was that



*Mayor Gena Robbins makes a purchase at York's new Piggly Wiggly.  
Photo courtesy of Brad Robinson*

our city staff understood exactly what was going on and they followed the plan presented to them with a great attitude and a fierce determination to keep the city going. Troubleshooting became a way of life. We did what we had to do in good spirits with a common belief that this would pass and we would eventually have a grocery store.

### **So, how did York resurrect its Piggly Wiggly?**

In February 2018, I was on the phone talking with a decade long friend, Brad Robinson of Birmingham. Brad was in the Navy and, as we conversed, he talked about his Naval schedule and I shared my concern over the grocery store and the lack of movement in a buyer. To my surprise, Brad asked for me to explain further – he was not aware of the dire circumstances in York. I couldn't imagine that I had not mentioned our grocery store crisis to Brad before now – I had been talking about it to everyone for almost three years – but he wished me good luck in getting it back open.

As it turned out, he was our good luck.

To my surprise, Brad called me two days later and asked that I stop trying to find a buyer; he wanted to purchase the grocery store. I couldn't believe it! After three years of continuously telling the citizens of York that so many of us were working so hard every day trying to find a way to reopen the grocery store, there was *finally* a ray of sunshine peering through our gloomy cloud.

Brad and his fiancée, Ruth Hanks, who was in the Army, were both within months of completing their military service and transitioning to reservist status. The couple met at Birmingham Southern College and, upon their graduations, pursued careers in the military. Both were exemplary members of the military – Ruth is only the fourth woman in the history of the United States to serve as a sentinel guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Brad recently earned his MBA from Syracuse University. They were already familiar with Sumter County, having been coming to the area for years to visit local friends. Brad and Ruth were also exploring the possibility of opening a brewery in Livingston.

Brad and Ruth did not abandon their desire to open a brewery. They decided it would be a good business plan to first acquire the grocery store and hold the brewery as a future project – that the grocery store will serve as a cornerstone of financial stability to open the brewery. The scenario of Brad and Ruth and the Piggly Wiggly is one that small rural towns – many that the world believes has one foot in the grave and the other dragging closely behind – dream about but feel they have very little chance of actualizing. And it is true that the stats are not strong for recruiting young people to rural, challenged communities; however, there is always hope – and the best friend of hope is action.

Municipal leaders and area stakeholders must remain vigilant and actively prepare for the unexpected while pursuing opportunities for our rural municipalities. York is a real-life example that Alabama’s rural communities are still appealing to young entrepreneurs. It’s incumbent upon community leaders to make opportunities for not only them, but business and industry as well. I know it’s easier said than done, but, we can’t stop preparing and believing. Often, rural communities simply need a small break to make a huge impact. It took York three long, difficult, challenging years. But Brad and Ruth are a breath of fresh air to York, and our community feels so special that they invested in us – they are a part of our family.

York is still paying off old debt and our resources are still not what they once were, even with the new Piggly Wiggly; however, we are working to create a new plan of growth for our city. I now say that we are “stable poor”, but – considering where we once were – I’ll take stable poor any day of the week. We continue to think outside the box, on top of the box, back in the box and, really, have jumped from the box to the rectangle trying to find new revenue sources for our city.

**What is your advice to other communities facing a similar crisis?**

To those communities facing the loss of a cornerstone business and trying to recruit, please let York be an inspiration to you! Keep talking and *don’t let up* – your critical need must stay on the minds of anyone or any organization that can help you. I’m also a firm believer that “the squeaky wheel gets the oil”.

***Be that squeaky wheel!***

It took partnerships and help from many entities to make the grocery store reopening happen. Every element was important.

- We had to find a way to stabilize the city’s repayment plan of the inherited debt and bonds while maintaining funds to pay current debt and expenses. Most of our creditors were gracious and allowed us to reduce our monthly payments, or in some cases, greatly stretch our payment plans. The word bankruptcy started popping up again, but we were not willing to take that route unless we absolutely had no other choice. One-on-one visits and personal phone calls to frankly and humbly explain our circumstance resulted in workable repayment plans.
- Even before the grocery store closure, God blessed the City of York with a great neighbor in the City of Livingston. Mayor Tom Tartt and City Administrator Bird Dial helped us as they



could. I encourage other cities to contract and/or work with your neighboring municipalities when suitable.

- Both owners of the previous grocery store wanted to sell their separate ownerships at a price that was reflective of the actual cost value of the building/property and the internal equipment/store supplies. However, the hard truth was that the property was in York, a high poverty and economically depressed area of Alabama. After about a year and half into attempts to sell the store, I contacted both owners and asked them to be realistic regarding the chance they would get their current asking price. It was a hard thing for me to do, because I knew if they had been in another area, they could have gotten their original asking price; however, I was delighted with the response from both – each reduced the sale price between 60-65 percent. The York family-trust group that owned the property had a deep love for the City and wanted to help reopen the grocery store. They understood York would have a limited chance of survival and would have great difficulty in recruiting new business without a grocery store. They also understood that people need fresh food. Although not a franchise owner, once the store closed, the owner of the internal equipment/supplies wanted to provide York with a chance to have a grocery store and supply food to the community, so he also lowered his asking price. Although he never said it, it was also probably easier to sell the items where they sat than to try and auction them off.
- The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) was the core funding partner for the grocery store. ADECA provided every means of support – explaining every viable process and possible additional partner, including one-on-one meetings in Montgomery and York with city officials and prospective buyers. Without ADECA, we would have no grocery store!
- The City of York offered a sales tax incentive for the grocery store purchase. For seven years, the City will refund 50 percent of the Piggly Wiggly sales tax paid to York back to the company. We know what it’s like to have no sales tax coming in from a

grocery store, so a 50 percent rebate incentive is much better than nothing at all.

- The Bank of York, our local hometown bank, worked with ADECA as a funding partner in the loan for the Robinsons. I hope each municipality, especially our rural communities, have a hometown bank as wonderful as we have with the Bank of York and its board.
- The University of West Alabama's Division of Economic and Workforce Development was also an important resource in connecting the dots and researching funding options. They provided a location for many of the project meetings and offered the use of computers, Internet access, phone access, etc.
- The Alabama Tombigbee Regional Commission was a never-ending source of guidance and direction and worked with us on contractual and funding needs.
- Many groups and organizations trying to help us with funding were introduced through contacts with the Alabama League of Municipalities, Delta Regional Authority, West Alabama Mayors Association, York Industrial Board and many others. Our state and federal legislators were also involved. This networking was vital.
- The Delta Regional Authority (DRA) worked with York Industrial Board in hopes a grant would allow the board to purchase the property. Unfortunately, the grant required a Letter of Commitment and there was no prospective buyer willing to commit to opening the store during the DRA grant cycle. However, the word-of-mouth by DRA members sharing York's need was tremendous and the City received many calls of interest and advice through that connection.
- City Attorney Richard Cross and the staff at Watkins Cross were at every meeting, traveled where we needed to go and worked with all entities to make this project a success.
- The York City Council stood with me on every aspect of this project – they gave me the freedom to pursue all routes and backed me on what we needed to do to reopen the grocery store.
- Even with the significant help from the above community and statewide partners, had it not been for Brad and Ruth Robinson, York would still not have a Piggly Wiggly. The Robinsons had a vision of what could be done – not just buying a grocery store that would be a good business investment for them, but the opportunity to help a community with a tremendous need while uplifting people who were starved for close access to fresh food. They also wanted to fill a sad void in an area of the country that must hold on extra tight to hope. Their investment in York made us all think twice about what it means to support what you are fortunate to have in rural areas.

**Many municipalities in rural Alabama lack the resources and necessary skillset to spur economic development and/or tackle revitalization efforts. Alabama's rural population is declining and many of those left behind are place-bound people – high school dropouts, single mothers and older adults – who lack the education and skills sought by employers. With no state agency dedicated to rural interests and no comprehensive approach in place to identify and address critical issues facing rural Alabama, what do you – as a mayor of a larger**

**municipality in the Black Belt – think needs to be done at the state and regional levels to begin addressing the areas that are falling behind?**

We keep trying to figure out how to bring business, industry and education back to rural Alabama. Some believe people should just leave their rural area homes and go to where the jobs are – abandon family homes and family members. I've never been handed an instruction book on how to shut down a rural municipality in Alabama, so I'm assuming we are here to stay. That being said, for rural areas to survive, I believe five main areas must be addressed:

1. Education and skills training: we need more locations close to rural areas with career technical programs. We need to allow for funding to provide for specialized skills training in short certification programs in more areas of the state. We should also look at providing fast transportation, such as a train, to create opportunities for people to continue to live in rural areas but work in the manufacturing jobs found in larger areas of Alabama. People in York could take a train to Tuscaloosa, work, then catch the train home to York.

2. Rural technology issues must be addressed: we must be able to communicate with each other – humans, computers and robots. Everything else is a nonstarter if broadband and technology access are not resolved.

3. Four-lane Highway 17 and other rural roads: we must be able to connect business, industry, jobs and people.

4. Help municipal officials and community stakeholders recruit manufacturing jobs to our areas.

5. Help municipal officials and rural leaders find a way to get people to where the jobs are and back home in the same day. We have folks who don't want to leave rural areas, but they need



*Mayor Gena Robbins with Brad and Ruth Robinson, owners of York's resurrected Piggly Wiggly. Their willingness to invest in this rural Alabama community, along with the aid of many other stakeholders, including state and federal lawmakers, state agencies, local businesses, regional organizations and neighboring communities, is a success story that should inspire municipalities throughout Alabama. Photo courtesy of Joan Rundles*

jobs as well as a way to get to and from the job location. That is an important issue that must be figured out. I know there are people in my community who would train for jobs if they could get to a place to be trained. *Transportation is a major obstacle for people living in a cycle of poverty who do not have a vehicle or the money for gas if they do have vehicles.* We've got to get people moving.

**Tell us about your part-time position as a Mayor and briefly describe the workload that comes with managing two different positions.**

I work as mayor in York and in the Division of Economic and Workforce Development at The University of West Alabama, including teaching the Career Exploration class at University Charter School. Part of UWA's mission is to be a source of positive change in Alabama's Black Belt, and I'm thankful my jobs compliment each other, particularly in that they impact the quality of life of people.

Jobs are like relationships – the attraction and successful continuation of both are dependent on our own personal preferences and tolerances. I say that because the job of being mayor is really a full-time plus relationship, 24-7 and then some. I feel the same about my job at UWA. To some, that may seem overwhelming, too heavy a workload, just like we may look at a friend's relationship with someone and think: "How in the world can they put up with that?" However, to me, it just feels good ... *right* – it's my preference within my tolerance level. I have a strong work ethic from watching my daddy build houses my whole life, and I fell in love with my sweet York by walking downtown on Saturdays, meeting and talking with people, while holding the hands of my mother and great-grandmother.

The ability to manage my career schedule is certainly easier with the support of my wonderful husband, Al, and my family. The City of York staff is outstanding – they know how to take care of our city and our citizens. I listen to the advice of our city attorney, city clerk and financial management team. And at UWA, we all work together like a fine-tuned engine. This strong base package of support is essential in allowing me to serve my community.

**What is the most challenging aspect of serving your citizens? Most rewarding?**

I love York and her people. I have lived in York my whole life, and I want each person to have a happy life and enjoy living in our city. That said, we are not the city we once were, we are in a

transition, as are so many of our small rural sister communities, and it requires us to shape a new identity of sustainability. To survive, we must move past the mind-set of what York *use to have* or what we *use to do*, especially as it relates to city revenue, population loss, infrastructure needs, loss of business, education – and the list goes on.

***To those communities facing the loss of a cornerstone business and trying to recruit, please let York be an inspiration to you!***

My most challenging aspect of service is getting our citizens to understand change has already happened in rural cities and communities, and we can't stop something that has already happened. A big and scary change happened in York, it's here and that train has left the station, so, let's not waste one more drop of our energy on trying to get it back. Instead, let's look at what we do have and how – by working together, with some meeting in the middle and putting our best foot forward – to formulate a new plan for a strong, successful home community.

The most rewarding aspects of service are the good, positive impactful things that I, working with great partners, am able to do to help the people of York. From our local festival where we eat and sing together to the celebration of a new sewage line or the reopening of a closed grocery store, the smiles and hugs we share are wonderful! I am also very happy when we can help someone in the community with an important special need – that's always a big deal. I also take tremendous personal pride in simply telling people that I am from York – and it seems almost everyone I meet can tell me a connection story to my hometown. That makes my heart smile.

When I became mayor, I had many questions and there was much I needed to understand and learn – and I'm still learning – about governing my city in the best possible way to serve our citizens. I'm responsible for the wellbeing of our community and take very seriously the job they elected me to do, as do all elected officials. Alabama is blessed with women and men of great ideas and tremendous talents – we have a gold mine of remarkable human capital as a state resource. We need everyone who is interested and ready to roll up their sleeves and work on "Team Alabama" – united in the goal to make our state the very best it can be! ■



*York Piggly Wiggly grand opening. Photo courtesy of Susan Youngblood*

# The Legal Viewpoint

By Lori Lein, General Counsel



## Protecting Municipal Financial Institution Excise Taxes and Four Important Updates from Your League Legal Department

With more than 4,000 calls and emails to the League Legal Department in 2018 alone, it's easy to assume that all we do is hole up in our offices and answer legal calls and emails, but your Legal Department at the League is doing so much more and not all of it is "behind the scenes." With this article, I'd like to update you on an important decision by the Alabama Court of Civil Appeals and our involvement in that case as well as provide you some information on what 2019 has in store for your Legal Department.

### Recent Alabama Court of Civil Appeals Case impacting Municipal Financial Institution Excise Taxes

The Alabama Legislature isn't the only place where laws relating to municipal authority can be impacted. The court system, both state and federal, also has a bearing on municipal authority. In addition to assisting with advocacy at the Alabama Legislature, your League Legal Department has been active in guarding municipal authority through the appellate courts.

While the League does not file lawsuits on behalf of its members, we do sometimes file *amicus curiae* briefs in cases on appeal to either the Court of Appeals or to the Alabama Supreme Court if we determine that the issues involved in the case have statewide significance. We also occasionally file briefs in federal court. One recent case the League filed a brief in has important consequences for your municipal bottom line.

On September 14, 2018, the Alabama Court of Civil Appeals, in a case involving Bryant Bank, held that the New Markets Tax Credit applies to reduce the financial-institution excise tax (FIET) liability by only the amount of the FIET proceeds distributed to the State General Fund, and not to the amount of the FIET proceeds distributed to the counties and municipalities in which the financial institution is located. *Alabama Dept. of Revenue v. Bryant Bank*, --So3d--, 2018WL4401687 (Ala. Civ. App. Sept. 14, 2018), cert denied Jan. 4, 2019.

The FIET imposes a six and one-half percent tax on the net income of every financial institution engaging in, among other things, banking within this state. Section 40-16-4, Code of Alabama 1975. Financial institutions subject to the FIET are required to file annual FIET returns and remit the FIET to the Alabama Department of Revenue (the department). The department, in turn, remits the FIET proceeds to the State treasury to be credited to the Financial Institution Excise Fund. After deduction of administrative charges payable to the department, the FIET proceeds are to be distributed as follows:

1. To each county "in which the financial institutions are located ... an amount equal to one fourth of the tax received from the institutions located in that county";
2. To each of the municipalities "in which the financial institutions are located ... an amount equal to one half of the tax received from the institutions located in those municipalities; and
3. The remainder to the General Fund of the State of Alabama.

The Alabama New Markets Development Act, Section 41-9-216 et seq., Code of Alabama 1975, establishes that taxpayers who make certain investments in designated areas of the state are eligible for a credit known as a "New Markets Tax Credit" against their FIET tax liability. Specifically, Section 41-9-218(10), Code of Alabama 1975, defines "tax credit" as "[a] credit against the state-distributed portion of the [FIET] tax otherwise due."

In 2014, Bryant Bank filed an FIET tax return, claiming a New Markets Tax Credit in the amount of \$708,000 against its FIET tax liability. This amount represented its full FIET tax liability including the amount that would be distributed to counties and municipalities. The department allowed Bryant Bank a New Markets Tax Credit in the amount of \$262,669, the amount representing only the portion of the FIET proceeds distributed to the State General Fund plus interest and penalties. The department rejected the credit against the FIET taxes distributed to counties and municipalities.

Disagreeing with the final assessment, Bryant Bank appealed to the Circuit Court. The Circuit Court determined that Section 41-9-218(10), Code of Alabama 1975, authorizes a New Markets Tax Credit only against that portion of the FIET proceeds distributed to the counties and municipalities and not to that portion of the FIET proceeds distributed to the State General Fund, and it entered a judgment declaring the FIET amounts due from Bryant Bank based on its determination.

Naturally, the Circuit Court's decision was unsatisfactory to both the Department and Bryant Bank, and had very negative consequences for counties and municipalities. Ultimately, both parties appealed the Circuit Court's decision to the Alabama Court of Civil Appeals. Because this decision had the potential to negatively impact all of Alabama's municipalities, the League filed an *amicus curiae* brief.

An *amicus curiae* (literally, "friend of the court") is someone who is not a party to a case and who may or may not have been solicited by a party to assist the Court by offering information, expertise, or insight that has a bearing on the issues in the case. Because they are not a party, often *amicus curiae* have the freedom to argue the broader policy issues which may result from a particular legal conclusion. They are also sometimes in a better position than the represented parties to present relevant information to the court that may not otherwise be put before the Court. The decision on whether to consider an amicus brief lies within the discretion of the Court. In this case, the Court readily accepted the League's request to submit a brief.

Bryant Bank consistently maintained throughout the litigation that, according to the rules of English grammar, the compound adjective "state-distributed" modifies the word "portion" to mean that the New Markets Tax Credit applies to that part of the FIET distributed by the state to the counties, municipalities and the state itself, leaving only the administrative expenses collected by the department unaffected by the New Markets Tax Credit. On the other hand, the department consistently contended that, when considered in the context of the FIET distribution scheme adopted by the legislature, the phrase "state-distributed portion" refers to that part of the FIET proceeds distributed to the state so that the New Markets Tax Credit reduces the FIET tax liability only to the extent of the proceeds payable to the State General Fund. Both argued to the Court of Civil Appeals that the Circuit Court "got it wrong" when it determined that the tax credit was against only the county and municipal portions of the FIET.

But while the parties to the lawsuit focused on the issues of proper English grammar and Department of Revenue interpretations, the League Legal Department was able to utilize its experience during the Legislative process, when the New Markets Tax Credit was making its way

through the Alabama Legislature, to argue to the Court how the Legislature never intended to impact the county and municipal portions of the FIET. Specifically, we presented to the Court the Legislative history of the New Markets Development Act, from introduction, substitution and amendments, as well as the fiscal notes that were updated as the bill progressed to final passage. That history, while not a part of the official court record, clearly supported the ultimate holding by the Court.

Relying heavily on the principal of law that in interpreting a statute, a court accepts an administrative interpretation of the statute by the agency charged with its administration, if that interpretation is reasonable, the Court agreed with the Department of Revenue's interpretation and held that the New Markets Tax Credit applies to reduce the FIET liability by only the amount of the FIET proceeds distributed to the State General Fund, and not to the amount of the FIET proceeds distributed to the counties and municipalities in which the financial institution is located.

Bryant Bank petitioned for review of the Court of Civil Appeals decision by filing for a Writ of Certiorari with the Alabama Supreme Court. However, on January 4, 2019, the Alabama Supreme Court denied the writ and the final judgement was entered for this case. This was a very important legal win for Alabama's municipalities.

If your municipality is involved in a case on appeal that your municipal attorney believes is of statewide interest, please review the Amicus policy under the Legal Services link on the League website ([www.alalm.org](http://www.alalm.org)) or contact the League Legal Department directly.

## **Four Important Updates for 2019 from the League Legal Department**

### **1. Website – Legal Services**

Have you been to the Legal Services portion of the League's website lately? While the League's website may have a whole new look, the information contained in the Legal Services section hasn't changed. There is a wealth of information available to assist you and your municipality.

Under the Legal Services tab you'll find links to important legal research information. Need to look at a particular Section of the Alabama Code? We have a link for that! Looking for a specific Attorney General Opinion or want to search for one? We have a link for that, too. We have links for Alabama's administrative rules, the Ethics Commission, the Secretary of State and even have a link to the records retention schedule from the Alabama Department of Archives and History.

In addition to links for legal research tools, we also have legal resources prepared by the Legal Department such as comprehensive manuals on various topics like volunteer

fire departments, laws of a clean city, annexation (including forms) and a manual entirely devoted to the role and duties of the municipal clerk.

Have a legal question? Can't find the answer in your *Selected Readings for the Municipal Official* (2016 ed.)? You may want to peruse the Legal Services section of the website to see if there might be a resource available that can help. Of course, you are always welcome to simply give us a call.

## 2. Elections, Elections, Elections – 2020 is right around the corner!

Speaking of manuals prepared by the League Legal Department, it's time to start gearing up for the 2020 municipal elections which means time for an updated *Elections Manual*. Historically, we've always treated the "kick off" of municipal election season as the annual municipal clerks fall conference preceding election year. Typically, that training session is solely devoted to preparing clerks for the upcoming municipal elections. In conjunction with that training, the Legal Department finalizes the *Elections Manual* to be used as a resource during the election cycle.

This year, the Legal Department plans to have the 2020 Elections Manual ready in November 2019, in time for the clerks fall training. Prior to the complete manual, however, we will have an Elections Calendar posted and ready for reference in August 2019, exactly one year prior to the election.

## 3. ALM Strategic Plan – Municipal Government 101

As part of the League's recently adopted strategic plan, the Legal Department is in the process of developing a training program, Municipal Government 101, that can be used to help educate the public and potential candidates about municipal government. Our plan is that, in addition to providing training for municipal officials and employees, we can help train the average citizen about the importance of municipal government and help dispel some of the myths and mysteries about how cities and towns operate.

## 4. Training for YOUR municipal attorney

To further help municipal attorneys represent their clients, the League created the Association of Municipal Attorneys (AAMA) in 1992 to assist municipal attorneys with training and information specific to municipal law. In addition to AAMA, the League created the Alabama Municipal Judges Association (AMJA) in 2007 to provide similar services and training opportunities for municipal judges. AAMA and AMJA, jointly, conduct two training seminars annually for municipal attorneys, prosecutors and judges. We strongly encourage all municipal attorneys, prosecutors and judges to join AAMA or AMJA and hope

that all municipal officials will strongly encourage their local attorneys and judges to join and participate in these important organizations.

Keeping in mind that most municipal attorneys are only part-time municipal attorneys, it is a great benefit for your municipality if your attorney gets their mandatory CLE training in municipal law. We offer a minimum of 12 hours per year between our two training sessions. Please encourage your municipal attorney, judge and prosecutor to register for our Spring Law conference, April 12-13, 2019 in Florence and September 26-28, 2019 at the newly opened Gulf State Park Resort. For more information, contact the League's Legal Department, or visit the League's website, where links to information about AAMA and AMJA are posted.

## Conclusion

Hopefully most municipal officials and employees are aware of the services offered by the League Legal Department and if not, I would encourage them to read the article titled "The Legal Department – A User's Guide" in the *Selected Readings for the Municipal Official* (2016 ed.). Regardless, please don't hesitate to contact us ■



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# F.A.Q.

Your Frequently Asked (Legal) Questions Answered  
by Assistant General Counsel Teneé Frazier

## Public Purpose Doctrine – Economic Development – Section 94.01 Code of Alabama, 1975

### Can Cities use public funds to attract private businesses and encourage economic development in their communities?

Section 94.01 (Amendment 772) of the Code of Alabama, 1975 gives municipalities (and counties) flexibility in encouraging economic development in their communities. Section 94.01 permits municipalities to lend its credit to or grant public funds and things of value in aid of or to any individual, firm, corporation, or other business entity, public or private, for the purpose of promoting the economic and industrial development of the county or the municipality. However, a municipality must comply with two conditions before giving aid pursuant to this provision. In order to comply with Section 94.01, the municipality must:

1. Pass a resolution at a public meeting stating that the desired use of public funds or materials furthers a valid and sufficient public purpose, notwithstanding any incidental benefit accruing to any private entity or entities. (At a minimum, the governing body should be able to articulate some legitimate, objective public purpose that is furthered by the action. It would not be sufficient to simply state that an expenditure is made “to accomplish a public purpose” without expressly stating the nature of the benefit to the public.)
2. At least seven days prior to the public meeting, publish notice of the public meeting in the newspaper having the largest circulation in the county or municipality, describing in reasonable detail the action proposed to be taken, a description of the public benefits sought to be achieved by the action, and identifying each individual, firm, corporation, or other business entity to whom or for whose benefit the county or the municipality proposes to lend its credit or grant public funds or thing of value. ■

## Sunday, May 5th is **City Shirt Day**

at the League Convention in Mobile. Wear your city's logo shirts with pride! For more information about the Convention, visit [www.alalm.org](http://www.alalm.org). See our Quick Guide on page 46.





# Legal Clearinghouse

Rob Johnston, Assistant General Counsel



**NOTE:** Legal summaries are provided within this column; however, additional background and/or pertinent information will be added to some of the decisions, thus calling your attention to the summaries we think are particularly significant. When trying to determine what Alabama law applies in a particular area or on a particular subject, it is often not enough to look at a single opinion or at a single provision of the Code of Alabama. A review of the Alabama Constitution, statutory law, local acts, administrative law, local ordinances and any relevant case-law may be necessary. We caution you *not* to rely solely on a summary, or any other legal information, found in this column. You should read each case in its entirety for a better understanding.

## ALABAMA COURT DECISIONS

**Zoning and Planning:** City council's adoption of conditions prior to approving a proposed zoning ordinance violated the statute on notice requirements for ordinances. *Ex parte Buck*, 256 So.3d 84 (Ala. 2017).

**Tort Liability:** Statute providing for a cap on damages recoverable against government entities is not applicable to individual capacity claims. *Wright v. Cleburne County Hosp. Board, Inc.*, 255 So.3d 186 (Ala. 2017).

## UNITED STATES COURT DECISIONS AFFECTING ALABAMA

**Zoning and Planning - Religion:** City, in denying zoning applications of Buddhist religious organization and landowners seeking to construct Buddhist meditation center in residential district, did not impose a substantial burden on applicants' religious exercise under RLUIPA. City did not pressure applicants to forego their religious precepts, although applicants' religious exercise allegedly required them to locate in a quiet and serene area, such as the subject property, these qualities were attributable to various properties, not just to this property. The applicants did not show that their religion required them to locate at this particular site. The organization held overnight retreats only two to three times a year and so applicants' inability to host monks at this property was, at most, an inconvenience, and applicants' safety concerns did not implicate religious exercise. However, the court found that a triable issue of fact existed as to whether the city acted with a discriminatory purpose in denying the applications. *Thai Meditation Association of Alabama, Inc. v. City of Mobile*, 2018WL4688732 (S.D.Ala. 2018).

## ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OPINIONS

**Contracts:** City may contract with the Etowah County Mayor's Association to facilitate an agreement with a corporation for the provision of emergency air medical transport to the municipality's residents. AGO 2019-008.

**Employees:** A municipality may allow its employees to participate in a deferred compensation plan and may provide health insurance benefits to its employees and retirees. The current rules of the RSA-1 deferred compensation plan, as administered by the Retirement Systems of Alabama, do not allow employer contributions. AGO 2019-011.

**Licenses:** If the city does not levy and collect license fees in its police jurisdiction, it may seek to collect insurance proceeds from applicable policies held by individuals who reside in the police jurisdiction pursuant to the costs of fire, emergency management services ("EMS"), hazardous material, and rescue services rendered by the city's fire department. Because the city levies and collects taxes to fund the services of its fire department, the city may not seek to collect insurance proceeds from applicable policies held by individuals who reside in the corporate limits pursuant to the costs of EMS, hazardous material, and rescue services rendered by the fire department. The city is not allowed to collect insurance proceeds from applicable policies held by commercial/industrial occupants located in the corporate limits pursuant to the costs of hazardous material mitigation or remediation because the city collects taxes and fees to fund these services. If the city does not levy and collect license fees in its police jurisdiction, it may collect insurance proceeds from applicable policies held by commercial/industrial occupants located in the police jurisdiction pursuant to the costs of hazardous material mitigation or remediation. AGO 2019-012.

**Payroll Deductions:** A public school official charged with administering payroll deductions does not have the authority to conduct an independent investigation into whether a membership organization has filed false information when certifying that none of its membership dues are used for political activity. Such an official should report his or her concerns to the Department of Examiners of Public Accounts. AGO 2019-016.

**Mayor and Council - Voting:** If the vote of a municipal council and the mayor in a municipality of less than 12,000 inhabitants results in a tie, the mayor is eligible to cast his or her vote if the issue is subsequently revisited. AGO 2019-017.

**Open Meetings Act:** The Greater Birmingham Convention and Visitors Bureau is subject to the Open Meetings Act. AGO 2019-018. ■

# Are you registered?

## 2019 Advocacy Day/Advocacy CMO Session

Tuesday, March 19 • Capitol Auditorium/Alabama State House

[www.alalm.org](http://www.alalm.org)

The League's Annual Advocacy Day/Municipal Legislative Advocacy CMO provides a unique opportunity each year for municipal leaders to take their messages to the State House – and for the power of the ALM membership's collective voice to be heard. A strong municipal presence at the State House demonstrates the effectiveness of the state's cities and towns in building a stronger Alabama economy.

- 8:30 – 9:00 a.m. Registration (Alabama State Capitol - Auditorium)**
- 9:00 – 9:10 a.m. Welcome**  
Councilmember Adam Bourne, Chickasaw, Vice-Chair Committee on State & Federal Legislation; Ken Smith, Executive Director, ALM
- 9:10 – 9:45 a.m. Senate Leadership Panel**  
Senate Pro-Tem Del Marsh; Senate Majority Leader Greg Reed; and Senate Minority Leader Bobby Singleton
- 9:45 – 10:30 a.m. House Leadership Panel**  
Speaker of the House Mac McCutcheon; House Majority Leader Nathaniel Ledbetter; and House Minority Leader Anthony Daniels
- 10:30 – 11:45 a.m. Perspective from Executive Branch**  
Lt. Governor Will Ainsworth; Governor Ivey's Chief of Staff, Jo Bonner
- Noon – 2:00 p.m. Lunch at RSA Plaza Terrace**  
Opportunity Zones in Alabama – How to maximize their power: Alex Flachsbart  
ALM Advocacy Program: Greg Cochran, Deputy Director, ALM
- 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. GROUP PHOTO and then Legislative Visits at the Alabama State House**



*Members of ALM's Committee on State and Federal Legislation*

# Now is the Time to Reinvest in Alabama's Future

By Greg Cochran, ALM Deputy Director

The Alabama Legislature will begin the 2019 Legislative Session at Noon on Tuesday, March 5, and they are entering a session like no other legislative body has entered before. Both the General Fund and Education Trust Fund are experiencing more than expected revenues. It appears we have survived the "great recession" – our job markets and our economy are strong.

## **Now is the time to reinvest in Alabama's future.**

When we look toward the future of our state and reflect on the economic impact new businesses are having on our economy – such as Mazda-Toyota in north Alabama, Airbus in Mobile, Mercedes Benz in Tuscaloosa, the Amazon distribution center in Bessemer – it is evident that the strong growth in Alabama can be seen from the Shoals all the way to the Gulf Coast. We've also seen tremendous growth in tourism revenues from people around the world visiting the Equal Justice Initiative Center in Montgomery, our incredible state parks, the U.S. Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville as well many other sites throughout Alabama. These tourists are spending money on food, hotels, gasoline, gifts and souvenirs as they travel through our state.

Yet even as our economy is growing, there are challenges in our quest to be the best we can be in offering the quality of life amenities our citizens desire for their communities to raise their families, find employment and invest in their future. This Legislature is poised to address the ailing infrastructure around our state. The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) has stated in several Infrastructure Task Force meetings that they need an additional \$360 million dollars to meet the maintenance demands on our state and local roads. Currently, Alabama has 18 cents in motor fuel excise taxes on the books. We need another 12 cents to meet the stated ALDOT projections. The last time the Legislature raised the state motor fuel excise tax was 1992. Nearly three decades of inflation has eaten away at 30 percent of the value in these revenues.

## **Now is the time to reinvest in Alabama's future.**

ALM encourages and supports Governor Ivey and the Legislature in enacting an additional 12 cent excise tax on state motor fuel sales. This would raise approximately \$360 million in essential revenue to maintain our state and local infrastructure – an investment in our state that is *essential* to the future success of not only economic development but providing the quality of life our citizens desire. How do we market our state to investors to bring their business

to Alabama, provide jobs to our citizens and provide a tax base to our local economies if we ignore the opportunity to place a *priority* on our infrastructure?

## **Now is the time to reinvest in Alabama's future.**

The additional motor fuel revenues will also be used to upgrade our facilities at the Port of Mobile. The deepening and widening of our shipping canals into the Port of Mobile must be a priority. This project will require \$150 million in state investment. United States Senator Richard Shelby has committed to matching the investment with *\$750 million* in federal assistance. Alabama may never have another opportunity to achieve this project – one that benefits our entire state as raw materials are imported to supply our manufacturers and then finished goods are exported around the world, as are fuels needed to supply road builders to construct our infrastructure. If we do nothing, these imports and exports will be moved to ports in Louisiana, South Carolina and Georgia – depriving Alabama of the economic boost to our economy. This return on this investment will benefit our state and citizens with *billions* of dollars.

## **Now is the time to reinvest in Alabama's future.**

Governor Ivey and the Legislature must also address online sales tax, Medicaid, mental health, prisons, law enforcement and education during this quadrennium. All these issues provide the safety nets in caring for our citizens that make our communities better places to live and raise families. Their legacy and our legacy should be that we were brave leaders and we took this opportunity to invest in our state, our citizens and our future.

## **Now is the time to reinvest in Alabama's future. ■**

## Monday Morning Huddles

New for 2019!

Monday morning conference calls with League advocacy staff to discuss the pending issues being considered by the Alabama Legislature during the Legislative session beginning on Monday, March 4 at 10:00 am and going through Monday, June 10. These calls will allow you the most up to date information on the issues being acted on by the Legislature, strategies for coordinated advocacy, and messaging by your league advocacy staff.

Conference call number (800) 724-2485

Conference Code # 164068

While pundits provide many explanations for this, a common thread among those cited reasons is that women simply aren't running for these positions. You can't get elected if you don't toss your hat into the ring.

Which automatically brings up a related question – why aren't more women attempting to get elected or appointed to serve in municipal leadership positions? Of course, you first have to define what constitutes a leadership position. Isn't someone who occupies a position capable of exerting influence a leader?

While some may disagree with my conclusion, I feel that the municipal clerk occupies a position of extreme importance and influence. And, historically, the vast majority of municipal clerks – in Alabama and elsewhere – have been women. If you take that into consideration, then we have had many, many appointed female municipal leaders over the years.

The Alabama League of Municipalities strives to be a diverse, inclusive organization. We pride ourselves on taking elected officials with differing viewpoints and helping them meld into a common voice on issues affecting municipal government. We don't maintain records on the gender, race or other similar data of candidates for municipal offices (or of those who are elected, for that matter). Our approach has always been that the League represents all municipalities and all municipal officials and their individual characteristics are irrelevant.

Admittedly, I tend to focus on the things that bind us together, the similarities we share, rather than what sets us apart. If a municipal leader strives to better those around them and unite people, I hope to emulate them and help them achieve their goals. If they are divisive or cause strife, I have much less admiration for them, even if they are considered successful.

At the same time, we have to recognize that there are differences among the elected officials we serve, and among those who elected them to office. So, while this issue profiles female municipal leaders, I prefer to think of this issue as celebrating the diversity that exists among our membership.

### ALM to Develop Mentorship Program

So, broadening the question on the table, but using women as the example, why aren't more women running for office? One reason that is frequently given is that women don't identify with the officials they see. They don't see other women in office and so, they either feel that they don't stand a chance of election, or that women just don't have a place among municipal elected leaders.

I don't think this feeling is unique to women. People tend to identify with those who are more like them. Seeing someone in a position of power with a characteristic with which we identify—whether that is gender, race, ethnicity, age group, disability or something else – can serve to embolden us to pursue a similar path. This is one of the main reasons our Executive Committee has instructed the League staff to develop a mentorship program. We want to educate those who are elected to serve and, at the same time, encourage the best and brightest – regardless of individual characteristics – to run for office.

Of course, there are other benefits that mentorship provides. For the one being mentored, it provides an experienced person from whom to ask questions or seek advice. It can help you avoid similar mistakes. Hopefully, it will make you better at the job of being a municipal official, and – from a League perspective – encourage your participation in League programs and activities. It exposes you to new ideas, perspectives and approaches and may lead to

reconsideration of your goals and practices. It can increase your confidence and give you a network contact. At the very least, it provides a sound board to bounce off ideas.

But a mentorship program also benefits the mentor. Your services as a mentor demonstrates recognition of you as a leader in your area, improving your sense of self-worth. It allows you to explore your own concepts and ideas with someone who offers a new, fresh perspective. Being a mentor allows you to feel that you are giving back in some way. If you've reached a level of leadership, most of us desire to provide guidance and assistance to help those who are coming behind us. It can be a source of new energy and satisfaction, especially as you watch the person you've mentored grow and succeed. You can take pride in the role you played in their success.

Admittedly, other state municipal Leagues have had mixed success with mentorship programs. There are 49 state municipal Leagues. All states other than Hawaii have an association like the Alabama League of Municipalities (although I have volunteered to travel to Hawaii to establish a municipal association – like those we're going to encourage to serve as mentors, I'm always willing to give back.) Several Leagues I've spoken with indicated that although enthusiasm was high at the beginning, interest in serving as a mentor or in having a mentor waned over time. Some Leagues choose to abandon their programs after several lackluster years. The number of Leagues that have pursued a structured mentorship program is small, though. And there are other state Leagues that, like us, are just starting to pursue mentorship as a way to help our members train each other, build relationships with each other and work toward developing future League leaders.

Whether a mentorship program will be successful or cause an increase in women (or others) serving in elected positions in Alabama remains to be seen. But without a doubt, those officials who choose to participate in our program will better understand their duties and functions. It will help them be better prepared to address the issues that confront them on a daily basis.

The League is proud to honor the women mentioned in this issue. We are proud of the accomplishments of our women Past Presidents, Councilmember Nina Miglionico of Birmingham (1981 – 1982), Mayor Sue Glidewell of Rainbow City (1994 – 1995), Councilmember Alice Reynolds of Montgomery (2001 – 2002), and Councilmember Sadie Britt of Lincoln (2015 – 2016). We're proud of Alabama's only National League of Cities President, Councilmember Cynthia McCollum of Madison (2008). I've had the pleasure of working with all of these women except Miss Nina, about whom I've heard so much admiration expressed by those who personally knew her. I've worked with many other fine women elected leaders as well. You'll never find a better group of women – of *individuals* – anywhere.

But we're even prouder of the large group of officials they represent. Women and men from all walks of life. Individuals who each bring their own ideas, goals and concepts in an effort to better their communities and the League. These people devote their time and energy toward improving their cities and towns and the larger community in which they live.

Thanks to each of our officials for sacrificing so much. I hope that this issue makes them stand a little taller. And I hope that the mentorship program, once it is up and functioning, will encourage and help educate more individuals – just like them – to serve in the future. ■

Families participating in Thrive Together Shelby County can begin the intake process at multiple locations. The primary entry portals will be Shelby Emergency Assistance, Montevallo Head Start and Montevallo Boys and Girls Club. Secondary entry portals include schools, churches, libraries, DHR and Safehouses, among others.

“By combining a virtual intake and data collection service with personal on-site coaching, families in need of services can access a more seamless system as opposed to the disjointed, time consuming process they’re used to,” said Councilmember Jordan-Smith.

“We like to say there is no wrong door for a family,” Mayor Cost said. “A family’s path will include access to supports like postsecondary education, child care, transportation, asset building, workforce training, health and wellness and whatever else the families tell us they need during their intake interview. And rather than driving all over the county like they often do now, participating families will be directed to services in closer proximity to their homes.”

No matter their entry point, every family will receive coaching to help them access resources, build skills and reach personal, family and career goals. The coach builds on family strengths and offers individualized supports as well helping to identify and address obstacles to success.

“Throughout our history of funding 2Gen programs, we have learned that a quality family coach is necessary for long-term success,” said Jacob Smith, Grants and Research

Director and Thrive Together project lead for The Women’s Fund of Greater Birmingham.

Over the previous 18 months, Thrive Together Shelby County organizations worked closely with a team of national experts from the Aspen Institute, The Women’s Fund of Greater Birmingham mission strategies staff, a local coach and incorporated advice and feedback from families who have participated in similar pilot programs funded by The Women’s Fund of Greater Birmingham. The family voices were critical in informing the team’s understanding of the needs of the families in their service area and how best to redesign their delivery approach.

“As a funder, we are committed to bringing and investing in innovative and scalable solutions that accelerate economic prosperity for all. We value and look forward to expanding opportunities to bring public and private entities to the table to solve social problems,” Bridgeforth said.

Mayor Cost echoed: “By fully integrating a comprehensive range of services and coaching families through a pathway to prosperity, I am confident that Thrive Together Shelby County will be transformational to families in our county and ultimately across the state, if and when adopted more broadly.” ■

*Founded in 1996, The Women’s Fund of Greater Birmingham accelerates economic opportunity for women and their families through philanthropy, research and advocacy. For more information, visit [womensfundbirmingham.org](http://womensfundbirmingham.org).*

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# 2019 Convention Quick Guide

Mobile, Alabama • May 4-7  
[www.alalm.org](http://www.alalm.org)

All information subject to change.

CMO credits can be earned. See convention program for details.

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## Saturday, May 4

8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
9:00 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.  
10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.  
1:00 p.m. - 1:45 p.m.  
2:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.  
3:45 p.m. - 4:45 p.m.  
  
6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

### Registration: Convention Center, Concourse Level

Convention Orientation

Resolutions Committee Meeting, Renaissance Mobile Riverview Plaza Hotel  
AMIC Annual Meeting, Renaissance Mobile Riverview Plaza Hotel

**OPENING SESSION:** Gov. Ivey (invited)

**General Session:** Heather McTeer Toney, The Resolution Firm,  
Social and Civic Responsibility Management

**City of Mobile Welcome Reception at Gulf Quest National Maritime Museum**

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## Sunday, May 5

8:45 a.m. - 9:45 a.m.  
9:45 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
10:00 a.m. - 10:50 a.m.  
  
11:10 a.m. - Noon  
  
Noon - 2:00 p.m.  
2:00 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.  
3:30 p.m. - 4:45 p.m.  
5:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

### **CITY SHIRT DAY: Wear your city shirt today with pride!**

Prayer Service

### Registration Opens: Convention Center, Concourse Level

**Back to the Basics Concurrent Sessions:** General Powers of Municipalities;  
Digital Engagement: Remaining Relevant in the 21st Century; HR Overview

**Back to the Basics Concurrent Sessions:** Duties of the Mayor and Council;  
IT Security 101; Advocacy 101

Lunch on your own

**Concurrent Sessions:** Grants/Federal Programs; Alabama EMA; 2020 Census

**Population Roundtables – Identifying Problems; Finding Solutions**

Municipal Marketplace Showcase and Reception (Prize Drawing at 6:30 p.m.)

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## Monday, May 6

8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.  
8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.  
9:15 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.  
10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.  
10:30 a.m. - Noon  
Noon - 1:15 p.m.  
1:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.  
3:00 p.m.  
3:00 p.m. - 3:45 p.m.  
3:45 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.  
6:00 p.m.  
7:00 p.m.  
After the Banquet

### Registration: Convention Center, Concourse Level

### Municipal Marketplace Open

Breakfast in the Municipal Marketplace (Prize Drawing at 8:30 a.m.)

**General Session:** Legislative Advocacy

Municipal Marketplace Break Service

**Concurrent Sessions:** Nuisance Abatement; Ethics; Finance

Networking Roundtable Boxed Luncheon (Prize Drawing at 1:00 p.m.)

**Ask Your Attorney Session**

Voting Delegate Check-In Desk Opens

Break Service

**Annual Business Session**

Reception

**President's Banquet**

Entertainment: Three on a String

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## Tuesday, May 7

8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.  
8:00 a.m. - 8:15 a.m.  
8:15 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.  
  
9:30 a.m. - 9:45 a.m.  
10:00 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.

### Registration: Convention Center, Concourse Level

Break Service

**General Session:** Dr. Roberto Gallardo, Purdue University,  
Center for Rural Development

Break Service

**CLOSING GENERAL SESSION:** Sean of the South, Columnist,  
Novelist and Radio Show Host

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