

The Alabama

MUNICIPAL

Official publication of the Alabama League of Municipalities

Journal

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About ALM:

The Alabama League of Municipalities is a nonpartisan membership association of over 450 incorporated cities and towns. Since 1935, the League has worked to strengthen municipal government through advocacy, training and the advancement of effective local leadership. As the recognized voice of Alabama's cities and towns, ALM's member municipalities benefit from a variety of member programs, services and activities that are impossible to accomplish alone.



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The Alabama MUNICIPAL Journal

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On the Cover:

Advocacy, as defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, is the "act or process of supporting a cause or proposal." Advocacy is a team sport. It has greater strength in numbers. The Alabama League of Municipalities was created to advocate on behalf of and with the support of Alabama's cities and towns. The League encourages our membership to be actively engaged with our ADVOCACY efforts. Original design created by Karl Franklin.

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New Year, New Engagement Opportunities Await

Gregory D. Cochran • Executive Director

The ALM team is welcoming the new year with renewed vigor in providing necessary resources for our members while also being fully aware of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead as the Alabama Legislature convenes on Tuesday, February 6. With that in mind, we encourage our municipal officials to stay engaged with us to protect your authorities and enact proactive proposals to strengthen your ability to attract economic investment and build communities where people want to live, work and prosper.

The League's advocacy team has battled many legislative proposals over the years preempting tax authority by municipalities. During the 2023 Regular Session, the Legislature adopted a process for the reduction of sales tax on groceries, in which municipalities have the authority to opt-in and reduce or eliminate their sales taxes on groceries. We also saw the adoption of motor fuel legislation mandating that any new local motor fuels taxes be earmarked for roadway management. Additionally, the Legislature adopted changes to the road liability laws, pushing more of the responsibility of road liabilities off roadbuilders onto local governments. Each of these policies continues to erode the authority of our local officials to manage and administer their local resources to best provide essential services to its citizens.

As session approaches, we have already begun hearing from lawmakers with ideas of enacting legislation to allow for recreational sales tax holidays, preemption of sales taxes on feminine hygiene and baby products, preemption of realtor satellite offices from local business licenses, deduction of excise taxes from business license calculations, and preemption of local zoning and regulatory authority as it pertains to data-mining operators. Again, each of these proposals, if not crafted properly, erodes existing municipal government authority. We must advocate for language that maintains local control by municipal leaders – because we know that local leaders are best equipped to make decisions on how local resources should be used throughout their communities.

Historically, our advocacy team engages in 200-300 legislative proposals each session. It takes us all, ALM staff and municipal officials, engaging together to prevent harmful policies from being considered and adopted. The ALM advocacy, legal and communications teams - Kayla Bass, Bryan Parker, Baker Allen, Rob Johnston, Kaleb Beck and Lori Johns - work tirelessly to ensure we are engaged in legislative discussions and proposals; however, ALM's success many times is based on your engagement. Your conversations with state policymakers is vital to the efforts on amending, supporting or working against a proposal. Our members are the most effective advocates on local issues. It is essential that legislators hear from YOU – their constituents – during policymaking decisions.

In closing, I share with you the many ways you can become a Hometown Hero (an award given annually to a municipal, state or federal leader): read our weekly e-newsletter, This Week; attend the ALM Advocacy Day in Montgomery, Wednesday, February 7; and join us in Washington, D.C. for the NLC's Congressional Cities Conference, March 10-13. Our team will email the State House Advocate newsletter to our registered members on Friday afternoons during the legislative session to update them on what has taken place that week.

During the NLC's CCC, the League hosts several events focused on networking opportunities with our Alabama congressional delegation. On the evening of Sunday, March 10, we will host the Alabama Caucus Meeting and Reception to hear from federal leaders on the top national issues being discussed in D.C. and how those impact our state. On Monday evening, we will host a reception honoring our delegation and their staff; on Tuesday morning, we will host U.S. Sen. Tommy Tuberville and Sen. Katie Britt at a breakfast to provide attendees with their priorities.

We have intentionally created multiple platforms to share information and opportunities for your engagement. Let's engage together with policymakers, stakeholders and partners in creating communities where all citizens want to live, work, play and prosper, and where businesses want to invest. Peace be with you. ■



Leadership Perspective

Mayor Randy Garrison • Hartselle • ALM President



Hello, my fellow League friends, I trust you all had a great holiday season with a merry Christmas and great New Year's celebrations. I wish each of you the best year yet for your cities and towns. We are now entering an especially crucial time of the year as we prepare for session to begin. Each of us can influence our legislators, both state and federal. We all need to be aware of what is happening not only in Montgomery, but in Washington, D.C. as well, since legislation proposed can and will affect each of us and our citizens.

I would like to encourage you to be involved and advocate for not only your municipality but for all 465 in our great state as well. One way would be to attend the annual Advocacy Day scheduled this year for February 7 in Montgomery. You will hear from the leaders of both houses about legislation that is being proposed and will be working its way through the legislative process. Also, let me encourage you to stay in contact with your local senators and representatives beyond this event. While the League has an impressive advocacy team, with Kayla, Baker, Bryan, Rob and Kaleb, your local folks need to hear your voice and hear you advocating for your municipality and its citizens.

Please be aware and on the lookout for updates each week from the League, especially on hot topics that may need special attention and deliberate action on your part. The League sends legislative updates each Friday tracking legislation that will directly affect each of our municipalities. The League does an excellent job of keeping us informed, but we all must be willing to do our part so that we can achieve the desired outcomes.

Lastly, this year, the League has launched a new texting service. If you have not already signed up for this, please do so at your earliest convenience. This was requested by the board of directors and has been implemented to communicate immediate requests for action, by League membership, during session. To learn more on how to sign up, view the instructions on the next page.

As always, it is a pleasure to work alongside each of you as we move our municipalities forward. ■



Mayor Mark Saliba • Dothan • ALM Vice President

I don't know about you but ever since Thanksgiving, the last couple of months have flown by!

Speaking of time, February 6th is upon us and that means that the Alabama Legislature will begin the 2024 Regular Session. Of course, since the fall there have been many topics that have been floating around that could be on their list of legislation, such as a gambling bill, Simplified Sellers Use Tax (SSUT) amendments and many more that will surely come up.

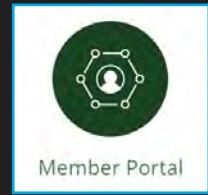
Advocacy Day, the day after session begins, is always a great way to participate with the League and have your issues communicated to state leaders. Never underestimate your ability to influence the Legislature; your direct involvement and communication is important to them! I am sure that some of you are already holding your own local events like we do. One of my favorites is put on by the Dothan Area Chamber of Commerce, an eggs and issues breakfast where the legislators come and provide an update on the legislation they are working on or expect to discuss during session.

I also hope that you have your funding requests listed and prioritized for 2024, to start communicating to the legislators what your cities and towns' needs and opportunities are for the coming year. It seems by all indications that this may be your last year for "big" asks as federal dollars will be flushed out and state revenues bring in less.

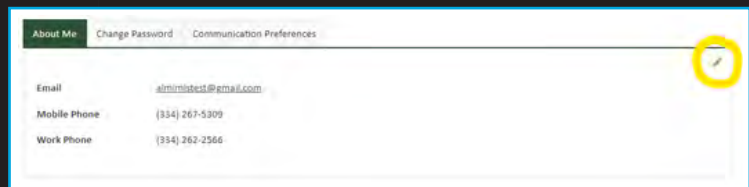
Stay involved with the League, and let them do their magic on guiding us through 2024! ■

Opt In to ALM's New Text Messaging Service

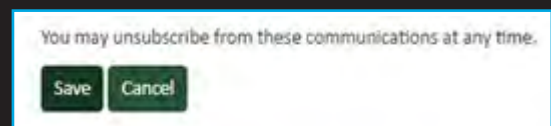
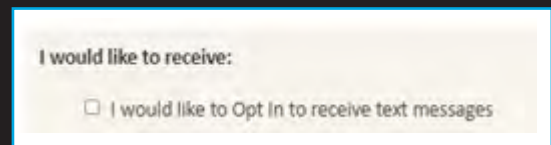
1. Go to ALM's website <https://almonline.org>
2. Click on the **Member Portal** icon and type in your username and password.
3. Verify that your Mobile Phone number is listed in the mobile phone field.



4. If your mobile phone number is missing from the **About Me** tab, click the pencil in the top right-hand corner. Enter your number, then click Save.



5. Click on the **Communications Preferences** tab to see the list of communication options.
6. Select **"I would like to Opt In to receive text messages"** from the options, then click Save.
7. You have now opted in to receive text messages and will receive a **Welcome** text message within 24 hours. You can sign out of your account now.



Congratulations! Welcome to the ALM text alert system!

The Alabama Legislative Process

ALM Legal Department

One of the prime functions of the Alabama League of Municipalities is to represent the interests of municipal government at the legislative level by informing members of legislation introduced that might affect municipal government and by presenting bills to the Legislature on behalf of Alabama's municipalities. It is extremely important for municipal officials and officers to have a good, basic understanding of the legislative process in Alabama. This article briefly explains the workings of the Alabama Legislature and how legislation is passed by that body.

Constitutional Provisions

Article IV of the Alabama Constitution of 1901 (Sections 44 through 111) establishes the legislative department of state government. Section 44 states that the legislative power of the state shall be vested in a legislature composed of a Senate and a House of Representatives. Section 44 has been construed by the Alabama Supreme Court to give plenary power to the state legislature. *State v. Lane*, 181 Ala. 646, 62 So. 31 (1913).

According to the Court, the Alabama Legislature possesses all of the legislative power residing in the state under the United States Constitution, except as that power is expressly or impliedly limited by the Alabama Constitution. This differs from the powers granted to the United States Congress in that Congress can exercise only those powers enumerated in the Constitution of the United States or implied therefrom.

Article IV prescribes the manner of drafting bills, the organization and qualifications of members of both houses, authorizes each house to determine the rules of its proceedings and establishes procedures for the enactment of laws. Due to space limitations, only the provisions most applicable to the interests of municipalities will be discussed in this article.

Composition of the House and the Senate

The state legislature consists of 35 senators and 105 members of the House of Representatives. This number was established by order of a three-judge federal district court for the Middle District of Alabama, Northern Division, in the case of *Sims v. Amos*, 336 F. Supp. 924, aff'd, 409 U.S. 942 (1972). In the decree, the court divided the state into 105 house districts and 35 senatorial districts. Each house district is entitled to one representative and each senate district is entitled to one senator. Each district has approximately the same number of people as any other district.

Qualifications of Legislators

Section 47 of the Alabama Constitution of 1901, states that senators must be at least 25 years of age at the time of their election and representatives must be at least 21 years of age at the time of their election. Both senators and representatives must also have been citizens and residents of Alabama for three years and must have lived in their respective districts for at least one year immediately preceding their election.

Section 60 of the Alabama Constitution of 1901 states that no person convicted of embezzlement of public money, bribery, perjury or other infamous crimes is eligible for membership in the state legislature.

Each house has the authority, given by the Alabama Constitution, to punish its members. With the concurrence of two-thirds of either house, a member may be expelled. A member who has been expelled for corruption is not thereafter eligible for membership in either house. Sections 53 and 54, Alabama Constitution of 1901.

Election and Terms of Members

Members of the House and the Senate are elected, for four-year terms, on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November in the even years which are not leap years. Their terms begin on the day following their election. Their terms expire on the day after the election of their successors four years later. Section 46, Alabama Constitution of 1901. Amendment 57 to the Alabama Constitution of 1901, provides that each house shall judge the qualifications of its members.

Organizational Session

The state legislature meets in Organizational Session on the second Tuesday in January following the election of

members. The only business that may be transacted at such a session is the organization of the legislature for the ensuing four years, the election of House and Senate officers, the appointment of standing and interim committees, the canvassing of election returns and the determination of contested elections.

During the Organizational Session, the House membership elects a speaker who has the duty of presiding over the House of Representatives. The House membership also elects a speaker pro tem to preside over the House in the absence of the speaker.

The Senate is presided over by the lieutenant governor. During the Organizational Session, the Senate chooses a president pro tempore to preside in the absence of the lieutenant governor.

Pursuant to Section 53 of the Alabama Constitution of 1901, the House and the Senate adopt rules of procedure for the next four years.

Legislative Committees

The standing committees of each house are established by the rules of each house. These committees, which are required by the Alabama Constitution, operate throughout the session for the consideration of legislation assigned to them.

Committee members are named at the Organizational Session and hold membership throughout their terms. The members of House standing committees are appointed by the speaker of the House. Members of Senate standing committees are appointed by the senate president pro tem.

Length of Sessions

Amendment 339 to the Alabama Constitution of 1901, requires the state legislature to meet in annual regular sessions. Each regular session is limited to 30 legislative days within 105 calendar days. Each special session called by the governor is limited to 12 legislative days within 30 calendar days.

A legislative day is a day on which either house of the legislature is actually in session. Normally, the legislature will meet in session two days per week and schedule committee work on the other days.

Types of Bills

Amendment 397 to the Alabama Constitution of 1901, states that a general law is a law which in its terms and effect applies either to the whole state or to one or more municipalities of the state less than the whole in a class.

A special or private law is one which applies to an individual, association or corporation. A local law is a law which is not a general law or a special or private law.

Section 11-40-12, Code of Alabama 1975, establishes eight classes of municipalities based on population. The legislature has the authority to pass measures which affect only those municipalities within a specified class or classes. Such classification legislation is defined as general law by Amendment 397 to the Alabama Constitution. Any legislation which has application to only one municipality must be advertised prior to introduction according to the provisions of Section 106 of Alabama Constitution of 1901.

Section 106, as amended by Amendment 341, states that notice of all local bills must be published, prior to introduction, at least once a week for four consecutive weeks in some newspaper published in the county. If no newspaper is published in the county, then the notice must be posted, prior to introduction, for two consecutive weeks at five different places in the county.

Steps in Passing Legislation

If a member of the legislature decides that a proposal has merit and that legislation should be enacted, the legislator prepares a bill or has a bill prepared for introduction into the house of which he or she is a member. That legislator then becomes the sponsor of the bill. All bills introduced must be prepared by the Legislative Services Agency (LSA) as directed by a member of the Legislature.

LSA is the principal bill drafting and legal research office serving the Legislature of the state of Alabama. LSA is a great source of information to the citizens of Alabama on all things relating to current legislation and historical legislative information.

Once bills are prepared by LSA, they are often introduced in both houses of the legislature on or about the same date. This practice is not prohibited except Section 70 of the Alabama Constitution of 1901, requires that all bills raising revenues shall originate in the House of Representatives. There is no limitation upon the number of sponsors that may sign a particular bill.

After introduction, the bill is assigned a consecutive number, for convenience and reference, and is read by title only. This action is known as the first reading of the bill. The speaker of the House of Representatives or the president pro tempore



of the Senate, depending on the body where the bill was introduced, refers the bill to a standing committee of the House or the Senate.

Section 62 of the Alabama Constitution of 1901, states that no bill shall become a law until it has been referred to a standing committee of each house, acted upon by that committee in session, and returned from that committee to the chamber for passage.

Standing committees are charged with the important responsibility of examining bills and recommending action to the full House or Senate. At some time when the House or Senate is not in session, the committees of each house will meet and consider the bills which have been referred to them and decide whether or not particular bills should be reported to the full membership. It is during these committee sessions that members of the general public are given an opportunity to speak for or against the measures being considered by the standing committees.

Bills which are favorably acted upon by the standing committees are reported to the entire house for consideration and are placed on the regular calendar. Bills reported unfavorably are placed on the adverse calendar. If a committee fails to act, the membership of each house, by a vote, may require the committee to act and report its action to the body at its next meeting.

The committee reports a bill to the full house when the reports of the committees are called. The bill is given its second reading at that time and is placed on the calendar. The second reading is by title only.

Section 63 of the Alabama Constitution of 1901, requires that every bill be read on three different days in each house and that each bill be read at length on final passage.

Bills are listed on the calendar by number, sponsor and title in the order in which they are reported from committee. Bills are considered for a third reading (passage) in the order of the calendar unless action is taken to consider a bill out of regular order.

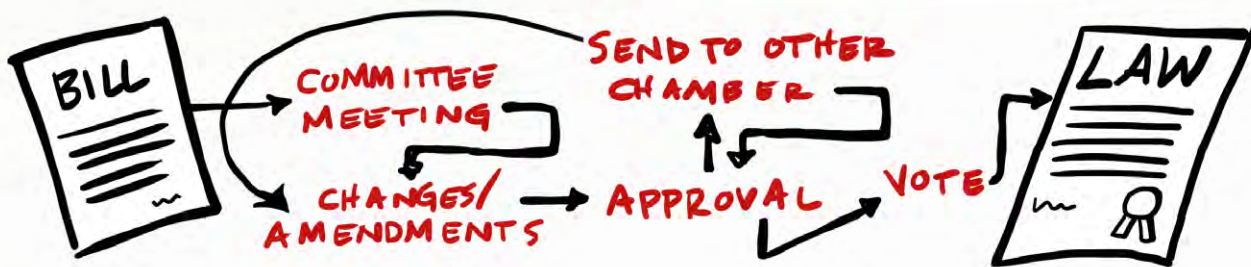
Important bills can be brought to the top of the order by special order or by a suspension of the rules. Special orders are recommended by the Rules Committee and must be adopted by a majority vote. In the final days of a session, both houses usually operate daily on special order calendars. When a bill comes up for consideration, the entire membership of the house considers its passage. The bill is read at length, studied and debated. In general, regular parliamentary rules of procedure apply when a bill is being debated on final passage. Each house has special rules which limit debate. A majority vote in each house is necessary for passage of legislation except in cases where the Constitution requires more than a simple majority. For example, a proposed Constitutional Amendment must receive the vote of three-fifths of all members elected. Section 284, Alabama Constitution of 1901. In a special session, any legislation not covered in the governor's call, or proclamation, must receive a two-thirds vote in each house. Section 76, Alabama Constitution of 1901.

Bills passed in one house are sent to the other house by a formal message and the bills then receive their first reading in the second house. Proposals go through the same procedure in the second house: committee study and report, second and third readings and floor debate and votes.

If the second house passes the bill without amendment, it goes back to the originating house for enrollment. If a bill is amended in the second house, it must be returned to the first house for consideration of the amendment. The first house may vote to concur or not to concur, in which case the bill dies. The first house may vote not to concur and request a conference committee to work out the differences between the two bills. If the other house agrees to a conference, the presiding officers of each house appoint members to the conference committee.

The conference committee meets and tries to reconcile the differences in the two versions of the bill. If agreement is reached and both houses adopt the conference committee report, the bill is finally passed.

Sometimes a house may refuse to adopt the report of the conference committee and ask for a further conference. If the committee is still unable to reach an agreement, it may ask to be discharged and request the appointment of another conference committee to begin the process again. If the conferees never agree, the bill is lost.



When a bill is passed in both houses in identical form, it is enrolled or copied in its final form and sent to the house of origin for signature by the presiding officer in the presence of the members. The measure is then sent to the second house where it is also signed by the presiding officer in the presence of the members. Then the bill is sent to the governor. The governor is not required to sign proposed Constitutional amendments, they are sent directly to the secretary of state for submission to voters for ratification at the time prescribed in the legislation.

Action by the Governor

When a bill reaches the governor, they may sign it and thus complete the enactment of a bill into law. However, if the governor objects to the bill, they may veto it or suggest amendments to the bill and return it to the house of origin. The bill is then reconsidered, first by the originating house and, if passed, by the second house. If a majority of the members elected to each house agree to the proposed amendments, the bill is returned to the governor for their signature. If both houses cannot agree to the governor's amendments or if the governor proposes no amendments but returns the measure, the bill has, in effect, been vetoed. The houses then may try to override the governor's veto. An affirmative vote of 18 senators and 53 representatives is required to override the governor's veto.

If the governor fails to return a bill to the house of origin within six days after it is presented to them, Sundays excepted, the bill becomes law without the governor's signature, unless the return was prevented by recess or adjournment. In such a case, the bill must be returned within two days after the legislature reassembles or the bill becomes law without the governor's signature. Bills which reach the governor less than five days before the end of the session may be approved by them within 10 days after adjournment. Bills not approved within that time do not become law. This is known as the pocket veto. The governor has the authority to approve or disapprove any item or items of an appropriation bill without vetoing the entire bill.

Budget Isolation Resolutions

Amendment 448 to the Alabama Constitution of 1901, states that the governor must submit a proposed budget to the legislature by the second day of each regular session. The legislature must make the basic appropriations necessary for the current budgetary period before passing any other legislation. However, if three-fifths of a quorum adopt a resolution declaring that this restriction does not apply to a certain bill, that bill may proceed to final passage. This is known as the budget isolation resolution and permits the legislature to enact legislation prior to adopting a budget.

Unfunded Mandates

The Alabama Constitution provides that any general law whose purpose or effect is to require a new or increased expenditure of funds held or disbursed by the governing body of a municipality or county, or instrumentality thereof, shall not take effect unless (1) it is approved by the affected governing bodies or (2) the legislature provides funding to pay for the mandate or (3) the legislature passes the legislation by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of those voting in each house. Amendment 621 of the Constitution of Alabama of 1901.

The amendment does not apply to: (1) local laws; (2) acts requiring expenditures of school bonds; (3) acts defining new crimes or amending definitions of crimes; (4) acts adopted prior to the ratification of the amendment; (5) acts adopted to comply with federal mandates, only to the extent of the federal mandate; (6) an act adopted or enacted by two-thirds of those voting in each house of the Legislature and any rule or regulation adopted to implement that act; (7) acts determined by the Legislative Fiscal Office to have an aggregate insignificant fiscal impact on affected governments; or (8) acts of general application prescribing the minimum compensation for public officials. The term "aggregate insignificant fiscal impact" shall mean any impact less than \$50,000 annually on all affected governments statewide.

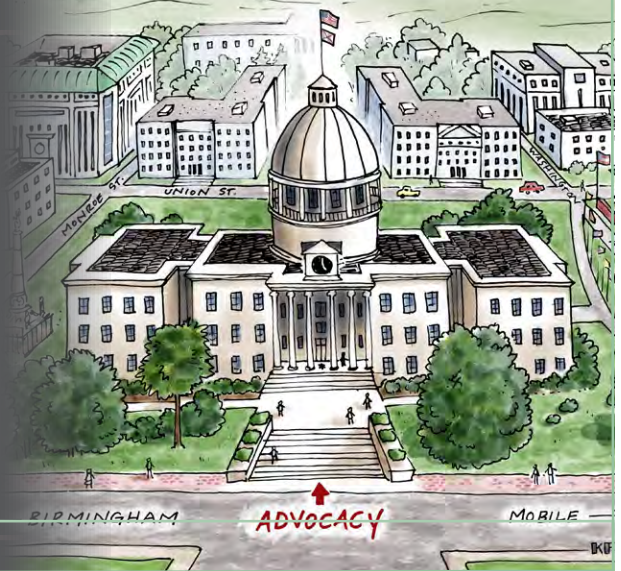
Conclusion

The purpose of this article is to give the reader a basic understanding of the Alabama Legislature as well as the process for introducing and passing legislation. It is important for municipalities to have a good basic understanding of Alabama's legislative process. For further questions relating to Alabama's Legislature and the legislative process, contact the Legislative Services Agency (LSA). For questions relating to legislation affecting municipalities, please contact ALM's Advocacy or Legal Departments. ■

ADVOCACY DAY 2024

Wednesday, February 7
11:00 a.m. – 4:45 p.m.

at the Alabama Activity Center (201 Dexter Avenue)
Reception* to follow at League Headquarters, 5:00 – 6:30 p.m.



2024 ANNUAL MUNICIPAL ADVOCACY DAY

Agenda

11:00 - 11:30 a.m.	Registration: Alabama Activity Center
11:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	Lunch
12:00 - 1:00 p.m.	Appropriations 101 <i>Michael Berson, Partner, Adams and Reese</i>
1:00 - 2:00 p.m.	Congressional Update <i>Todd Stacy, Alabama Daily News</i>
2:00 - 2:30 p.m.	Lt. Governor Will Ainsworth
2:30 - 2:45 p.m.	Break
2:45 - 3:30 p.m.	Senate Leadership Panel
3:30 - 4:15 p.m.	House Leadership Panel
4:15 - 4:45 p.m.	Governor Kay Ivey (invited)
5:00 - 6:30 p.m.	Reception at the Alabama League of Municipalities Headquarters <i>535 Adams Avenue, Montgomery, AL, 36104</i>



***Please plan to attend the reception to visit with your legislators!**

CMO Credit: This session has been approved for a total of five (5) credit hours and (1) emeritus point in the Basic, Advanced or Emeritus Certified Municipal Official Program. Two (2) of the credit hours meet elective core curriculum requirements. Any municipal employee may register; but only elected officials will be awarded credit hours in the CMO Program.

Full Speed Ahead for Alabama

Governor Kay Ivey

As we begin 2024, I am extremely optimistic for the future of our state. The new year is when we make predictions for the future. If the past is our guide, I see no slowing down in making life better than ever for all Alabamians.

To look ahead, we must first look back. 2023 was a milestone year for Alabama. Never before, during my seven years as your governor, have I witnessed so much energy and excitement from all levels of government to push our state forward. Our state's leaders on both sides of the political aisle were more focused on the fundamentals of growing our economy and giving every Alabamian an opportunity to succeed.

Right off the bat – in a historically productive legislative special session – swift action was taken to pass over \$1 billion in American Rescue Plan Act funding. This one-time investment in our state will pay for a generation of improvements to the quality of life for so many Alabamians. The impact will be substantial and long term for many of your communities, from water and sewer upgrades to broadband expansion and health care delivery.

On the heels of this achievement, lawmakers also quickly answered my call to pay off the final installment of the Alabama Trust Fund debt. What was once close to a half billion dollars in taxpayer red ink was finally reduced to zero. Unlike Washington, D.C., in Alabama, we pay our debts!

Not stopping there, Alabama's record-setting General Fund and Education Trust Fund budgets were both quickly passed and signed into law. These funds will help state agencies better meet the needs of citizens and better serve you as well. The record Education Trust Fund budget makes possible a range of targeted teaching enhancements to achieve progress in our classrooms, from growing the state's award-winning pre-K program to the implementation of the Alabama Literacy Act and the Alabama Numeracy Act to help students master the fundamentals at a critical early age.

Your hard work and support on the local level is the very foundation of our success. You know better than anyone else the positive impact targeted investment in new jobs, infrastructure and education can have for the people we all serve. You have seen the benefit of Alabama's strong focus on bringing more and better jobs to the state. With your help, we accomplished a major victory last spring in the renewal of vital economic incentives programs to continue to attract new business investment to Alabama. Thanks to your grassroots efforts "The Game Plan" sailed through the Legislature with robust bipartisan support.

With less than a month left before the launch of the 2024 Regular Session, my office is already working on new legislative priorities.

I remain committed to the major goals of promoting Alabama's economy through investment in business, education and infrastructure. Equally important, I am focused on ensuring Alabama students' performance rises among the top 30 states in the nation by the time I leave office. Alabama can lead the way not only in improving public education, but also in opening more avenues for school choice. That is why I will be supporting legislation to help provide Alabama parents with the option of education savings accounts for their children.

Despite nearly a year of trending record-low unemployment numbers, our state has a high percentage of potential workers who remain seated on the sidelines. This is a challenge for each of your communities, our world-class employers and our state as a whole. With your help, we will pass legislation during the upcoming session to make sweeping improvements to the way Alabama recruits, trains and delivers our citizens to the workforce.

We will continue to invest in broadband internet infrastructure. The state has made substantial progress in directing broadband access to many unserved areas, but as many of you know, we have much more work to do.

We know the importance of teamwork. TEAM means Together Everyone Accomplishes More.

Let's get to work! ■



Working to Make a Better Alabama for All

Lt. Governor Will Ainsworth

Since taking office as lieutenant governor just five short years ago, I have focused much of my efforts on preparing Alabama for new and expanding industries and investments; making our state the most welcoming in the nation for active military service members, veterans and dependents; and giving parents more flexibility in determining the education option that best fits their child. During the upcoming 2024 Regular Session, I will continue working to build upon the firm foundation we have already laid in each of these areas.

For the past several years, Alabama has led the nation in economic development, and the state's Department of Commerce could fill a room with all of the "Silver Shovel" awards and other industrial recruitment honors it has captured in recent decades, but if we are going to continue our forward progress and provide even more opportunity, hope and security to families across the state, our workforce must be prepared to fill 21st century jobs. Immediately after assuming office, I created the Lieutenant Governor's Commission on a 21st Century Workforce, and the group, which is comprised of superstars from the business community as well as proven leaders from state agencies and public education, has generated impressive results ever since.

Thanks to their efforts, for example, the wildly successful career technical dual enrollment program, which allows Alabama students to simultaneously fulfill their high school requirements while also enrolling in postsecondary classes that will ensure they are job-ready upon graduation, has expanded beyond anyone's initial notions. Dual enrollment is giving our future workforce a leg up on those in other states, and it is proving to be a powerful magnet that attracts new jobs, opportunities and investments. I believe dual enrollment has also played an important role in lowering Alabama's high school dropout rate, and it has helped develop the hidden, untapped potential that many of our students possess. The commission is currently determining new ways to push more Alabamians to enter the workforce so state revenues remain strong and automatic triggers within the budget will allow the final portion of the sales tax on groceries to be removed.

At the same time, the Alabama Military Stability Commission, which I chair by virtue of my office, is tasked with recommending and implementing the steps necessary to protect, preserve and promote the federal military presence across the state. Because of the commission's efforts, Alabama was also among the first states in the nation to pass legislation ensuring occupational licensing reciprocity for military dependents, which is a complicated way of saying a military spouse who, for example, is licensed to practice accounting in another state is also allowed to practice locally while stationed in Alabama. We have already passed bills allowing licensure reciprocity in dozens of professions, and those efforts will continue this year and into the future until every occupational field is covered.

Military families that come here often express concerns about the quality of our public education, and too many children and grandchildren of Alabamians are being forgotten by the system currently in place. With the authorization and continuing expansion of charter schools and school choice across the state, we have given parents a measure of decision-making power over how their children are taught, but we can do more to reform and improve the educational opportunities that Alabama provides. Various plans expanding school choice options will be introduced, debated and voted upon during the regular session, and I remain firmly in the camp of those who are open to new ideas and changing a system that has failed far too many for far too long. The time to offer parents true choice in how their children are educated has arrived, and I am proud to be a strong proponent.

Many thanks to all of you who hold office and work on the local level to make a better Alabama for everyone. Your efforts, ideas and programs have contributed greatly to the unprecedented prosperity being felt in cities, towns and crossroads across our state, and by working together, we can keep those successes coming for many years to come. ■



2024 Preview and Update

Senate Pro Tem Greg Reed

The Alabama Legislature was intent on sparking growth in Alabama's economy and protecting Alabama values in the 2023 Regular Session. We are proud of the over 150 bills passed in the Legislature last session. This included the passage of many important pieces of legislation benefiting Alabama municipalities before the Legislature adjourned on June 6. I want to commend my colleagues in the Alabama Senate for their hard work and steadfast dedication to delivering results to the people of Alabama, and I am incredibly excited about the outlook for the future of our state.

The Alabama Legislature passed a four-bill package, at the direction of Gov. Kay Ivey, coined "The Game Plan" to secure Alabama's economic future. This package of legislation was aimed at building on our state's success and providing more, higher-paying jobs to Alabamians through enhancing economic incentives to recruit businesses to Alabama. The Senate also championed new initiatives like the dram shop bill, retail theft legislation and the road builder liability bill in order to protect small businesses across the state.

The Senate also passed several key pieces of legislation to keep money in the pockets of hardworking Alabamians and small businesses. The grocery tax cut reduced the state's sales tax on grocery items from 4% to 3%. Additionally, there were more tax reducing measures including a one-time tax rebate and eliminating payroll tax on overtime pay. While all these initiatives were completed to ease the tax burden on Alabamians, the Senate was still able to repay almost \$60 million in debt to the Alabama Trust Fund.

In Alabama, we support our military. On top of providing necessary support for Alabama's extended defense, aerospace, and intelligence communities, the state Legislature passed a series of legislation to ensure that Alabama remains the nation's most attractive and friendliest state for active-duty military, their families and veterans.

Agriculture is a huge part of Alabama's economy and accounts for more than 20% of the jobs in our state. The Senate continued to show support to farmers across Alabama by cutting "red tape" for farmers in reporting referendums on an asset and establishing the Logging Efficiency Grant Fund for rural economic development.

Looking forward to the 2024 Legislative Session, it is our intention to carry initiatives to the floor that will positively impact all Alabamians. It is paramount we build on the success we have had in previous sessions to deliver results to the people of Alabama. This will include focusing on workforce development and labor participation. Gov. Ivey, Lt. Gov. Ainsworth, and Speaker Ledbetter have all commissioned groups to examine and define the way we tackle this issue in the Legislature. Alabama's workforce is the best in the country, and I believe continued investment in our local communities' workforces will keep Alabama ahead of her competitors as the best place to do business.

We will also continue to be responsible and conservative when looking at our state budgets. I also think it is incumbent on us as legislators to tackle school choice issues. Additionally, the Senate will examine parental rights within our children's educations. All of these issues are top of mind for senators that we plan to resolve because of their importance to our constituents.

The Alabama League of Municipalities does incredible work for the people of Alabama. Our state is a premier place to live and raise a family because of the strong leadership of our local governments. I am incredibly thankful for the work we do together that makes Alabama stronger and the best place to call home. ■



Be sure to read the State House Advocate on Fridays during the Legislative Session.

STATE HOUSE
ADVOCATE

THIS WEEK IN LEAGUE ADVOCACY



2024 Regular Session Will Continue Working Toward a Better Tomorrow for All Alabamians

House Speaker Nathaniel Ledbetter

With successful passage of unprecedented income tax rebates, a historic reduction in the state sales tax on groceries, sustainable and positive growth in both the Education and General Fund budgets, and other important measures, the 2023 Regular Session of the Alabama Legislature will be remembered as one of the most successful of all time, but lawmakers will be working to surpass even those impressive achievements when they return to Montgomery.

Creating a business climate that allows Alabama's success in economic development and industrial recruitment to continue ranks high on our list of priorities and will require us to examine, address and shore up those areas in which we are lacking. Though our state enjoys record low unemployment and record high economic growth, it is estimated that more than 50,000 Alabamians are unemployed and not participating in the workforce, despite the fact that roughly 140,000 job openings currently exist.

The most recent statistics show Alabama has the seventh lowest unemployment rate in the nation, but the labor force participation of 57.2% ranks 46th in the U.S. in eligible workers, aged 16 and older, who are employed or actively seeking employment. I recently created the House Commission on Labor Shortage that is working with the Alabama Department of Commerce, the Alabama Community College System, the Alabama Department of Human Resources, and other groups to develop a plan to encourage more eligible workers to join the labor force, and their efforts will be a focus of our attention.

Expanding school choice is another issue that has already begun to appear on the pre-session radar, and Gov. Kay Ivey has indicated to me that she will propose legislation. While Alabama already offers charter schools and choice options for students and parents zoned for underperforming schools, we can do more to ensure that the quality of a child's education is not determined by the zip code in which they live. At the same time, we must ensure safeguards are in place to ensure funding for our public education classrooms remains protected and secure.

Other issues ranging from drafting spending plans to improving school security to tightening Alabama's ethics law, and dozens more like them, await our attention, as well.

Because I am a former mayor and city councilmember in Rainsville, please remember that we invite and always welcome the insights, input, and suggestions from local elected officials across the state as we work toward a better tomorrow for all Alabamians. ■



THE ALABAMA

LEGISLATURE

Visit the Alabama Legislature's website to view bills, legislators' contact information, session info, live stream meetings and more!





Looking Ahead to the 2024 Legislative Session

Senate Majority Leader Steve Livingston

First, let me start by saying what an honor it is to have been recently selected by my peers to serve as the Senate majority leader. It is a privilege to serve alongside my fellow Senate colleagues in this new capacity, and I am looking forward to taking on this leadership role. I do not take lightly the confidence they hold in me, and it is a great honor.

The 2024 Legislative Session is fast approaching, and I suspect we will have a lively debate this year with the large number of House and Senate members that have qualified for the AL-02 congressional seat. It is sure to be an interesting session ahead.

I anticipate we will deal with a number of issues carried over from last year and, of course, many new issues. I expect that our budgets will remain healthy. I do not suspect our percentage increases will be as high as last year, but we were operating on record budgets last fiscal year. I do expect the General Fund and Education Trust Fund budgets to remain healthy. We have had exceptional leadership and management of our budgets in recent years, and their condition is evidence of that.

I do believe we will see some variation of school choice brought up and debated. As I understand, Gov. Kay Ivey is working on that and will have a package to present. Workforce participation has also been a hot topic as of late. The House has a task force working diligently to study and understand this issue. We know that different regions in our state have different issues they face regarding labor and workforce participation, but the why and how to overcome them must be addressed. I am confident we will see some legislation to address this directly after the task force reports their findings.

Election security is also highly likely to be brought up again this year. There is much passion surrounding this topic, and I believe we will see legislation to further address the security of our elections. I also anticipate the potential of some expanded ethics reform. Some 3.2 million Alabamians are affected by current ethics laws. I am unsure what any potential reform may look like at this point, but the potential is out there.

Lastly, I believe that we will see some type of lottery and gaming bill. Again, I am unsure what this may look like, but I believe between both legislative bodies and the governor's office, we will see something come up this legislative session. I believe there will be some aspect of illegal gaming reform as a part of that bill, and this needs to be addressed.

I am looking forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, in the upcoming session, to address many of these topics. I believe we can and will work together to find a healthy resolution to many of these. ■



2024 Legislative Preview

Senate Minority Leader Bobby Singleton

As we enter the second year of this quadrennium, I am excited about the opportunity our Democratic Party has to make an impact in the state of Alabama and on the national level, with another congressional seat in Washington, D.C. I plan to work hard to safeguard our voting rights and work to keep access to absentee ballots open to those who need it, without making it harder for our seniors and disabled constituents who rely on this method to cast their vote.

Unemployment rates are down, but we still have too many Alabamians working in low-wage positions, which jeopardizes their quality of life, access to health care and their ability to attain affordable housing. Therefore, we must work to make sure that the incentives businesses receive are passed on to their workforce. To build a world-class workforce, we must create a world-class educational system. Last year our state had a surplus, and we were able to provide taxpayers with a rebate. This year, I hope we will put any and all extra funding to use in the classroom so that our children can compete on the world stage.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the digital divide across our state, particularly in rural Alabama. That is why I will continue to work with Gov. Kay Ivey to solve this problem. Already, we have secured \$400 million in federal funding and over \$1.4 billion from the U.S. Department of Commerce Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program (BEAD) to expand access to high-speed internet throughout the state.

Alabama is a great state to live, work and play. That is why I plan to focus all of my efforts in the upcoming legislative session to make it an even better place for all who call Alabama home. ■

All Politics are Still Local

House Majority Leader Scott Stadthagen

It is often said that all politics are local, but as national media has become more easily accessible and local newspapers are printed less frequently, that adage sometimes seems to have been forgotten. As elected officials, at any level, effective public service requires us to not only remember the local impact of political decisions, but to make that a top priority when evaluating each of our decisions.

Constituents vote for their candidate of choice because they believe that we will represent their interests once we are sworn into office. They count on us to represent their views and honor the values and the promises we represented on the campaign trail. It is vitally important that we never forget that.

When I was first elected to the Alabama House of Representatives, I was told by someone very close to me to “never forget who sent me to the legislature and to never forget who I represent.” To do that requires each of us to be intentional about the bills we sponsor, the words we say at the mic and the votes we cast. We must always remember that we were elected to help make the people who elected us proud by striving to make the local areas we represent the best they can be. We must do that by honoring our promises, our values and the local men and women who voted to send us to elected office.

That is, after all, the cornerstone of politics, of leadership and of public service. ■



Looking Ahead: A Pro-Growth Vision for Stronger Communities in 2024

House Minority Leader Anthony Daniels

Only a few years ago, we were returning to session facing a public health crisis, an economic crisis, and an atmosphere of division and disunity. Today, as we look to the future, I envision a pro-growth agenda of policies that benefit Alabama communities, businesses, workers and families.

This month, hourly-waged employees who work overtime will take home more of their hard-earned pay, thanks to the overtime tax exemption that passed with overwhelming, bipartisan support. That measure, the first of its kind in the nation, shows what legislators can accomplish when we work together. Now, it is time to keep the momentum going.

I serve on the ad hoc committee assembled by Speaker Nathaniel Ledbetter to identify barriers to workforce entry. Parents make up 35% of our workforce and in Alabama, they miss work for child care purposes at a higher percentage than any other state. I have introduced legislation to establish an employer tax credit and a child care provider tax credit – tools to help expand access to quality, affordable child care.

Access to hospitals, emergency care and maternal care continues to be a major challenge for many communities. Unfortunately, it is getting worse with nearly half of our rural hospitals in danger of closing. In addition to providing vital services, they are major regional employers. Now, we must find a solution to close the health care coverage gap and attract more doctors, nurses and health care workers.

Finally, we cannot continue to delay vital investments in our public infrastructure, especially access to clean, safe and affordable drinking water and wastewater services. Significant upgrades are urgently needed as a matter of public health and economic health. We closed out last year with incredible progress in moving the goalposts forward, but we still have a ways to go. In the new session, I am working to keep the momentum going and keep Alabama growing. ■



ALABAMA DELEGATION EVENTS

March 10-12, 2024

During the Congressional City Conference in Washington, D.C., Alabama's Congressional Delegation will host several events for their constituents/guests throughout the conference. See below for more information.

For more information about the NLC event, go to <https://ccc.nlc.org/>

Sunday
March 10

4 - 6 p.m. **Alabama Caucus Meeting and Reception**
Marriott Marquis - 901 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001

Monday
March 11

6 - 8 p.m. **Alabama Congressional Delegation Reception ***
Charlie Palmer Steakhouse - 101 Constitution Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001

8 - 10 p.m. **Adams and Reese LLP Reception ***
Adams and Reese Offices - 20 F St. NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20001.

Tuesday
March 12

8 - 10 a.m. **Breakfast with U.S. Senators Tuberville and Britt ***
Marriott Marquis - 901 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001

*** Please Note:** All events are free to members, but some events require registration. More information can be found on the League's website by scanning the QR code.



Attorney General Marshall Secures Nearly \$1 Billion in Opioid Funding for Alabama



Since February of 2021, my office has negotiated and secured settlements against a variety of pharmaceutical companies and distributors that contributed to Alabama’s opioid crisis. As a result of these settlements, the state of Alabama — via both the state and its local governments — will receive nearly a billion dollars over the next decade for the purpose of abating the opioid crisis in our state. With these resources, we have an unprecedented opportunity to right the wrongs that these companies inflicted upon our state. **We owe it to the people of Alabama to get this right.**

Most of these settlements will be paid out over several years. The lengthy payout periods will allow us on both the state and local levels to implement and fund long-term strategies to address this crisis. This comes with significant responsibility. Each settlement requires that abatement funds be spent only to abate or reduce the opioid crisis in our state. To that end, each agreement includes a list of approved uses that limit how abatement funds can be spent. If abatement funds are spent on non-approved purposes, it could cost the state and its subdivisions future payments from the opioid defendants.

While there is some variation in the approved uses amongst the settlements, they all generally require that these funds be spent to address three broad categories of abatement: education, prevention and treatment. The approved uses are designed to serve as guardrails to channel spending toward appropriate abatement strategies but are also meant to be wide-ranging enough to give you the flexibility to best address the needs of your community. For examples of strategies in each of these categories, I invite you to consult the annual reports of the Alabama Opioid Overdose and Addiction Council, which I co-chair.

I am sure that many of you have already been approached by a variety of vendors seeking funding for opioid initiatives. Please proceed with caution. Though public-private partnerships may prove valuable in some instances, investing your funds with outside vendors should only be done after thorough examination of demonstrated successes in other cities or states. Ideally, you have already identified existing reputable organizations with demonstrated success that offer opportunities for partnership in this endeavor. It is also paramount that your decisions are made with full transparency and accountability to the constituents whom you serve. As always, Alabama’s ethics laws prohibit any action taken with a conflict of interest or for personal enrichment.

I am of the strong conviction that local governments know best how to combat the opioid epidemic in their communities. It is my hope that subdivisions will work with one another, and in some cases with the state, to implement a thoughtful and meaningful abatement plan that will yield regional benefits. If our cities and counties are willing to come together by regions to develop a larger, long-term plan for their areas, then there could be opportunities for the state to support these endeavors directly. The state has already invested a great deal into the agencies tasked with tackling the opioid epidemic, but I believe that it is time we considered a ground-up approach. Local leaders like you *are* on the ground, and we need your leadership.

The Alabama Legislature has recently established the Oversight Commission on Alabama Opioid Settlement Funds to allocate the state’s share of the settlement funds. Just like you, that body will have to decide how best to allocate the state’s share of the abatement funds. I would like to be able to report to the commission on the many ways that opioid funds are being invested at the local level and to encourage them to support any local projects or programs that have produced positive results. As you make decisions about expenditures, please share these with my office via OpioidFunds@AlabamaAG.gov. Your participation will also enable me to ensure that your spending is in keeping with the state’s settlement agreements.

The opioid crisis has touched countless lives across Alabama. It has brought pain, grief and death to so many. We have been presented with a real opportunity to ease the suffering in our communities. My office stands ready and willing to assist you as we work together to help heal our great state. ■

By Rob Johnston, Director of Legal Services, ALM

The Deadline is Coming! Beware the First of March! The Municipal Police Jurisdiction Revenue Report

“The British are coming!”
“Beware the ides of March!”
“You may delay, but time will not.”

These are a few famous historical quotes alerting an imminent and crucial deadline. On April 27, 2021, Gov. Kay Ivey signed into law Act 2021-297, which made significant changes to the municipal police jurisdiction rules. Changes in the act included a new reporting requirement for municipalities collecting revenue in its police jurisdiction.

Additionally, the act created an important reporting deadline that municipalities collecting revenue in its police jurisdiction must meet or risk losing its authority to collect. This deadline is **March 1** of each year. The report is filed with the *Alabama Department of Examiners of Public Accounts*.

Police Jurisdiction: What is it?

Police jurisdiction is the term used to describe a municipality’s extraterritorial powers beyond its corporate boundaries. It enables municipalities to provide services and protection to nearby areas located outside the municipal border. The police jurisdiction of cities having a population of 6,000 or more inhabitants, as of January 1, 2021, extends 3 miles beyond the corporate limits. In cities and towns of less than 6,000, as of January 1, 2021, the police jurisdiction extends a distance of 1.5 miles beyond the corporate limits.

Act 2021-297 immediately froze municipal police jurisdictions to 1.5 or 3

miles. If your municipal police jurisdiction was 1.5 miles prior to the act, it is now fixed at 1.5 miles and the same if your police jurisdiction was 3 miles. For those municipalities who were exercising a police jurisdiction by January 1, 2021, the police jurisdiction can continue to be exercised and enforced, but it will no longer grow outwards with new annexations. Eventually, as the municipality annexes property, the police jurisdiction will be consumed by the corporate limits and then exist no longer. For some municipalities this could happen quickly and for others, that are slow to grow, it could take longer.

For those municipalities who did not exercise a police jurisdiction by January 1, 2021, there will never be a police jurisdiction outside of the corporate limits to enforce.

Collecting Revenue in the Police Jurisdiction

Section 11-51-91, Code of Alabama 1975, gives municipalities authority to levy licenses in its police jurisdiction if it provides services in them. Police jurisdiction license levies must be made under the police power for the



protection of the health, safety and property of citizens in the area and to ensure good order, peace and quiet in the community. The Alabama Supreme Court has ruled that the Alabama Legislature intended for Section 11-51-91 to be a regulatory statute and not a revenue statute. Levies in the police jurisdiction may not be made under the taxing power for general revenue purposes.

As such, the amount of the license must bear a reasonable relation to the cost of the services rendered, and in no instance can it exceed one-half the amount levied for a similar business located within the corporate limits. Alabama courts have determined that a municipality's license fees or taxes on businesses within its police jurisdiction must do no more than allow the municipality to recoup the cost of extending municipal services to the inhabitants of the police jurisdiction, and the taxes may not be for the purpose of raising general revenue.

Municipalities who did not exercise police jurisdiction by January 1, 2021, are precluded from enforcing and collecting revenue outside of the corporate limits.

What Must the Police Jurisdiction Revenue Report Include?

Since 2015, municipalities collecting revenue within the police jurisdiction have been required by law to provide an annual report accounting for all license revenues collected in the police jurisdiction as well as a list of all services provided in the police jurisdiction. Unfortunately, compliance was very low thus greatly frustrating legislators and the general public.

Act 2021-297 provided that on or before December 31, 2021, any municipality collecting license revenue or other taxes and fees within its police jurisdiction outside the corporate limits should have notified the Department of Examiners of Public Accounts that it collects license revenue and other taxes and fees in its police jurisdiction outside the corporate limits.

Then, beginning March 1, 2022, any municipality collecting revenue in the police jurisdiction must provide the following:

1. An annual report accounting for all license revenues, and other taxes or fees collected in the police jurisdiction during the previous year.
2. A list of services provided in the police jurisdiction and the providers of the services.
3. If the municipality provides police and/or fire protection within the police jurisdiction it must also provide the following:
 - a. An annual budget for police and/or fire departments overall.

- b. A report of the number of calls responded to and overall activity performed in the police jurisdiction, including the number of citations and arrests made.

Inquiries about the police jurisdiction revenue report can be directed to the Alabama Department of Examiners of Public Accounts via (334) 242-9200 or municipalities@examiners.alabama.gov.

The March 1 Deadline Report

A copy of the annual report, which shall be completed **by March 1** for the previous fiscal year, must be forwarded to the Department of Examiners of Public Accounts and shall be made available to the public.

If a municipality fails to file a report within 12 months of the report being due, the municipality **may not** collect any further license revenue or any other taxes or fees in the police jurisdiction outside the corporate limits.

The Department of Examiners of Public Accounts is required to provide written notice to the Department of Revenue of any municipality prevented from the further collection of license revenue or other taxes or fees due to its failure to file.

In addition to the reporting, the act authorizes the legislative council to request an audit of the police jurisdiction of a municipality by the Examiners of Public Accounts. A municipality is only required to pay for this audit if the audit shows that they are not in compliance with spending in the police jurisdiction.

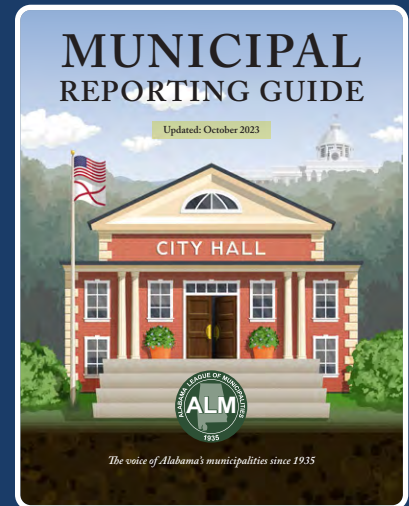
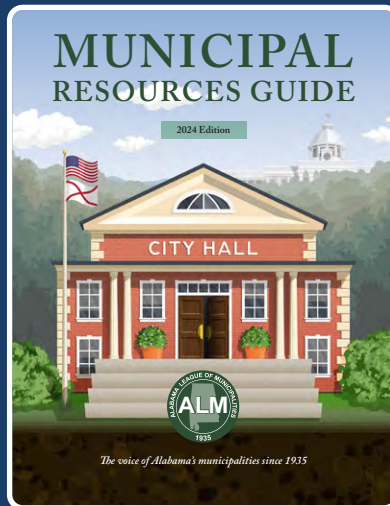
Conclusion

To avoid the harsh penalties in Act 2021-297, we encourage your diligence in working toward the March 1 deadline for the municipal police jurisdiction revenue report. As your municipality works through these unique issues, please do not hesitate to reach out to the League's Legal Department at 334-262-2566 so that we can assist you and your municipal attorney with workable solutions as you continue to navigate the changed status of your police jurisdiction. ■

The Alabama League of Municipalities has recently updated our **Municipal Resources Guide** and **Municipal Reporting Guide**!

As part of our mission to support our members, the League created these one-stop guides to ensure our municipalities are aware of various state resources they can apply for and laws that require local governments to provide annual reports on specific municipal operations. While these guides do not include all the information about each grant program and law, they do provide an overview of the requirements, contact information and deadlines. Please reach out to any member of our team at (334) 262-2566, if you need any assistance.

Both guides are living documents that will be updated each year. Members, legislators and other elected officials are encouraged to share these great resources. They can be accessed online at almonline.org.



Learn more about the **CMO Program** and how it strengthens municipalities by educating municipal leaders.



almonline.org/CMOProgram

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DRIVING INTO THE FUTURE: ALABAMA'S GROWING EV ECONOMY

MARK KELLY • COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST • ALABAMA POWER

Increasingly, the future of transportation in Alabama is electric.

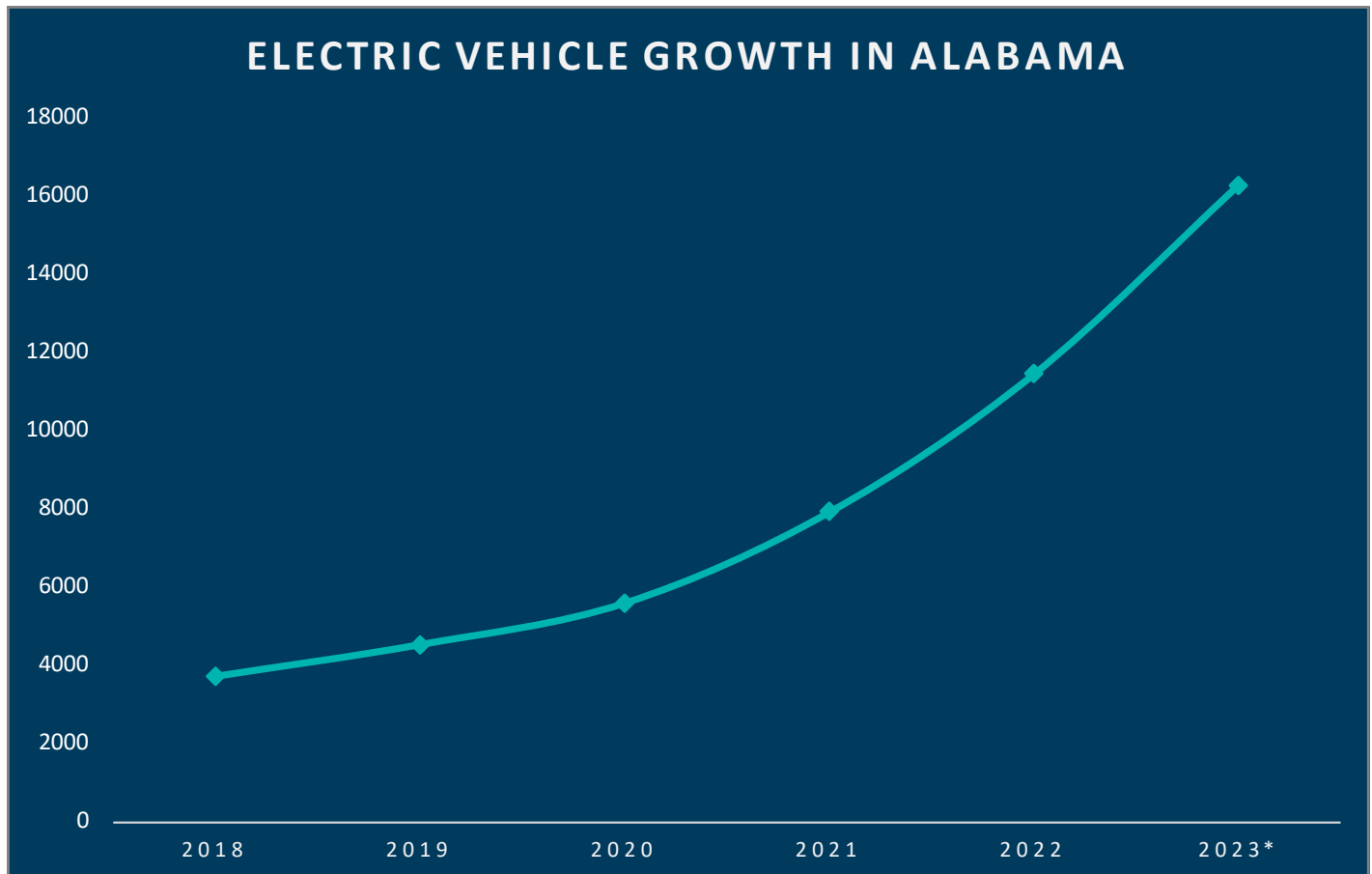
As electric vehicles continue to drive automobile innovation globally, EV-related manufacturing, services, and suppliers are becoming an increasingly important segment of Alabama's economy. Successful efforts to develop and leverage incentives on the federal, state and local levels continue to strengthen the state's commitment to the automobile industry.

The advantages of EVs are numerous. By using a source of energy that is produced domestically, they contribute to America's energy independence, decreasing reliance on petroleum imports. EVs run quietly, cleanly and efficiently, helping owners save money on fuel and maintenance. On average, EV drivers save 60% on fuel costs and spend about half as much on maintenance as those who drive gas-powered vehicles.

Numbers reflect the rising popularity of EVs. Since 2020, the number of EVs on Alabama roads has grown by 51%, with total vehicle registrations now over 16,000 and indications that the rate of adoption will continue to climb steadily.

Embracing opportunity

Across Alabama, local governments are embracing the opportunities EVs represent. Currently, there are more than 1,100 EV charging ports in Alabama cities and towns, as local leaders, state policymakers, and private-sector proponents work together to ensure that the benefits of the EV economy are fully available.



Among those helping to lead the way are the cities of Helena and Ozark. The mayors of both cities are enthusiastic about the future of EVs as an integral contributor to their local economies.

In Helena, Alabama Power Energy Services contracted with the city to install a dual Level 2 charger, with ports for charging two vehicles at a time, at the city’s sports complex. Helena Mayor Brian Puckett said the station has been operational since February 2023, and Helena plans to install additional chargers in the future.

“We want to continue adding the resources we need to benefit fully from the growing presence of EVs,” Puckett said, noting that the number of electric vehicles registered in his city is approaching 200. “We will continue to seek grants and look for other opportunities to develop the infrastructure needed to support EVs.”

Ozark has offered EV charging since May 2022, when Alabama Power Energy Services installed two dual Level 2 chargers in the city’s downtown court square. Like Mayor Puckett, Ozark Mayor Mark Blankenship said his city is committed to meeting current and future needs for EV charging. With Ozark’s location along the busy U.S. Highway 231 corridor, Blankenship welcomes the added commercial activity the charging stations are helping to generate.

“Our charging stations are conveniently located downtown,” Blankenship said. “That gives travelers along Highway 231 a reason to stop and explore our downtown shops and amenities. EV owners can charge their vehicles while they dine and shop with our local merchants.”

Leading the way in innovation

In 1993, Mercedes-Benz U.S. International (MBUSI) announced plans to build its only U.S. assembly plant in Alabama. Over the three decades since, Honda, Hyundai and Mazda Toyota have been added to the list of automakers with production facilities in the state, employing a combined total of approximately 21,000 Alabamians and turning out more than 1.3 million vehicles annually — making Alabama one of the nation’s top five auto producing states. Another 26,000 jobs are provided by the more than 150 automotive suppliers now located in Alabama.

Today, Alabama’s automotive sector increasingly includes EVs, with Mercedes and Hyundai both now producing EVs in Alabama. In addition, Mercedes has been making EV batteries at a new, \$1 billion facility in Bibb County since 2022, and Hyundai supplier Hyundai Mobis will begin manufacturing EV batteries at a new plant in Montgomery in 2024.

Meanwhile, Alabama is finding new ways to lead the country in automotive innovation. In a first-of-its-kind partnership, MBUSI, along with the University of Alabama and Alabama Power, established the Alabama Mobility and Power Center (AMP) in 2021. Created as an innovation ecosystem for EV development, AMP provides a hub for research and development to advance and sustain modern mobility and power technologies, build out the state’s charging infrastructure, and deliver the electricity needed to support large-scale EV growth in the state.

Investing in the EV economy

Alabama’s Gov. Kay Ivey is a strong supporter of continued growth in EV manufacturing and use. Since 2021, Ivey has invested in the state’s EV economy with \$8.2 million in grants to support installation of EV charging stations in the vicinity of interstates and other major transportation corridors, awarded through the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA).



There is also The Game Plan, Ivey’s package of legislative measures to support her strategy for creating jobs and increasing the economic vitality of families and communities. Overwhelmingly approved by the Alabama Legislature in 2023, The Game Plan includes programs and incentives to promote the growth of the EV economy and support other innovation-related and technology-related development.

“Many of the vehicles manufactured in Alabama have already begun the transition from fossil fuels to electricity,” Ivey said. “It’s exciting to come on board with projects to support EVs as they become more readily available and more Alabamians choose to drive them.”

The governor provided more encouragement and support for Alabama’s growing EV economy in November 2023, with her announcement that the state will build a \$30 million workforce training center in Decatur, focused on EVs and emerging technologies. Scheduled for completion during 2025, the center positions Alabama’s auto industry for the next chapter of its remarkable growth, Ivey said.

In addition to the state grant funding awarded by the governor, ADECA is also administering a five-year, \$79.3 million grant from the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) program. The program supports installation of new chargers, upgrades of existing chargers, and the addition of other charging infrastructure along designated Alternative Fuel Corridors (AFCs).

The NEVI program will fund up to 80% of eligible project costs, with the 20% match coming from state funds, utility incentive programs, and/or private sources. Matches can be in the form of cash, loans, non-federal grants, in-kind contributions, utility incentives for charging infrastructure or capital assets dedicated to the project. Alabama is a leader in using NEVI funds for innovative workforce development programs, focusing on areas like electric vehicle infrastructure,



installation and maintenance. The first round of funding from the NEVI program totals \$11.7 million.

Building Alabama’s future economy

Other critical partners in Alabama’s EV-related initiatives include the Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition (ACFC). A nonprofit organization based in Birmingham, ACFC promotes cleaner-burning transportation fuels as alternatives to petroleum, especially in circumstances where their use can reduce transportation-related costs for owners and operators. ACFC President Michael Staley said the state’s increasing emphasis on EVs as a key part of transportation planning helps further his organization’s mission and goals.

“There’s never been a better time for municipal leaders to leverage public and private resources to support adding electric vehicles and charging infrastructure to serve their fleets and their communities,” Staley said. “We are seeing opportunities for significant fleet cost savings that could be reinvested in other operational efficiencies. Part of our mission at ACFC is to help local leaders navigate this landscape.”

Among the Alabama companies actively supporting the state’s efforts is Alabama Power. The company has installed chargers in numerous communities throughout the state, such as those in Helena and Ozark. It offers a variety of programs and services for public charging electrification, including complimentary consultations for communities planning public charging locations and assisting companies with electrification of their fleets. Alabama Power experts stay on top of the latest EV technology to help customers prepare their sites for EVs and increase productivity and reliability in ways that meet the needs of their business.

Business customers can take advantage of Alabama Power’s Business EV Time-of-Use Rate (BEVT). This special rate minimizes demand charges for EV charging and is metered separately from other electric use. The company and its extensive network of partners can assist businesses with procurement of charging technologies; design of EV infrastructure, including optimal siting, planning for upgrades, and implementation cost estimates; and installation of charging facilities to help ensure reliability and long-term performance.

Alabama Power offers incentives such as the Make Ready Program, which provides customers with rebates on the “make ready” infrastructure required to support EV charging and connection systems. Residential customers with EVs can take advantage of the company’s Night Charging Discount, which allows savings on electricity use for those who charge their EVs during the off-peak hours of 9 p.m. to 5 a.m.

Houston Smith, chair of the Energy Institute of Alabama (EIA), said the partnership between private and public entities building and strengthening Alabama’s EV economy is strong and growing. Comprised of Alabama Power and other utilities and energy partners, EIA is working to promote clean energy, create high-paying jobs and strengthen Alabama’s economy.

“Leaders and policymakers at all levels, along with businesses, nonprofits, and a growing number of individuals in communities across the state, are aligning to help us continue to grow this important business sector and, ultimately, transform the state,” Smith said. “Alabama is embracing EVs.” ■



Benefits education shows employees you care.

63% of employees say their benefits package makes them at least slightly more inclined to stay with their current employer.¹

Benefits education provides employees with the information they need to understand their options and identify which benefits are right for them. Employees can appreciate their benefits more when their employer prepares them for enrollment, helping them make informed decisions.

Do your employees know their options?

While most employees enroll in benefits, roughly 4 in 10 feel they do not understand their benefits well. Additionally, 1 in 5 are unsure whether supplemental benefits (accident, critical

illness and cancer insurance) are offered at all.² Therefore, a lack of employee benefits education can cause some employees to miss out on the benefits they need.

How much do employees care about benefits?

Next to salary and work-life balance, more than half of employees cite medical benefits as one of the top five factors they look for in an employer.³ When employees understand their benefits and all the options available to them, they are more likely to make informed benefit decisions and value the benefits you offer.

As your strategic partner in benefits education, here's how we can help.

COMMUNICATION

- Education and promotion of all benefit options, including Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)

ONE-ON-ONE ENROLLMENTS

- Dedicated time with an account manager to talk through the benefits you've made available

YEAR-ROUND SUPPORT

- Continuous policyholder education and assistance maximizing their benefits

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Chuck Fewell, Former Mayor of the City of Greenfield, Indiana



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¹ LIMRA: 2022 BEAT Study; Benefits and Employee Attitude Tracker; May 2, 2022, P19 accessed Dec.11, 2023

² LIMRA: 2022 BEAT Study; Benefits and Employee Attitude Tracker; May 2, 2022, P24 and 27 accessed Dec.11, 2023

³ LIMRA: 2022 BEAT Study; Benefits and Employee Attitude Tracker; May 2, 2022, P5 accessed Dec.11, 2023



2023 CMO Graduation Honorees

November 8, 2023 • Perdido Beach Resort, Orange Beach, AL

During the 2023 Municipal Leadership Institute, the League recognized 39 Certified Municipal Officials, 36 Advanced Certified Municipal Officials and 11 CMO Emeriti, for earning their respective designations after completing 40, 80 and 120 credit hours of training. As of graduation, more than 5,200 municipal officials have attended the League’s training in municipal government in the past 29 years.

The League also presented Certified Municipal Achievement Awards to 13 municipalities, which is the most ever. The CMA Awards were created in 2018 to honor municipalities where the municipality’s mayor and full council obtain at least 40 credit hours individually, if not more, within a year. ***Congratulations to all!*** ■

2023 CMO Emeriti

- Councilmember Charles Bailey, Albertville
- Councilmember Michael T. Phillips, Bay Minette
- Councilmember Carrie R. Brown, Brewton
- Councilmember Adam Bourne, Chickasaw
- Councilmember Connie Robinson, Citronelle
- Mayor Gayle C. Robbins, Florala
- Mayor Randy Garrison, Hartselle
- Councilmember Jennifer W. Smith, Jasper
- Councilmember Charles Black, Priceville
- Councilmember Ruthie Campbell, Robertsdale
- Councilmember Paul Hollingsworth, Robertsdale

2023 Advanced CMOs

- Councilmember Dianne Ballard, Ashland
- Councilmember David Jennings, Brewton
- Councilmember Glenn Williams Sr., Center Point
- Councilmember Mike Nichols, Centreville
- Mayor Mike Oakley, Centreville
- Councilmember Jewel D. Oliver, Clio
- Mayor David Mitchell, Columbiana
- Councilmember Douglas Goodlin, Daphne
- Mayor Mark Saliba, Dothan
- Mayor Tom Maddox, Elba
- Councilmember Barakas N. Taylor, Fairfield
- Councilmember Michelle R. Eubanks, Florence
- Councilmember Richard James Dayton Sr., Foley
- Councilmember Jimmie Herbert Lay, Fultondale
- Councilmember Kent Back, Gadsden
- Mayor Chuck Ables, Geraldine
- Mayor J. Brian Puckett, Helena
- Councilmember Walter Jones, Homewood
- Councilmember Jeanette Tuck, Jackson’s Gap
- Councilmember Delbert Chandler, Midland City
- Councilmember Anthony Thomas, Monroeville
- Councilmember Stanley Enfinger, Ozark
- Councilmember Vickey F. Carter, Phenix City
- Councilmember Patrick Dean, Priceville
- Councilmember Melvin Duran III, Priceville
- Councilmember Ashley W. England, Priceville
- Councilmember Jeff Prince, Rainbow City
- Councilmember Joe McDonald, Saraland
- Councilmember Katrina Hennings, Springville
- Councilmember Veronica Bandy-Freeman, Tarrant
- Mayor Jason A. Reeves, Troy
- Councilmember Agnes Geraldine B. Thompkins, Tuscumbia
- Mayor Michael Gordon, Yellow Bluff
- Mayor Willie Lake, York
- Councilmember Chandra Mitchell, York

2023 Certified Municipal Officials

- Mayor Curtis Baird, Alexander City
- Mayor Danny Baker, Blountsville
- Councilmember Ray Baxley, Blountsville
- Mayor Mark Powell Mansfield, Centre
- Councilmember Mike Nichols, Centreville
- Mayor Mike Oakley, Centreville
- Councilmember Tommy Ivey, Childersburg
- Councilmember Awlahjaday Agee, Clanton

2023 Certified Municipal Officials *(continued)*

- Mayor Kathy Thomas, Clayton
- Mayor Curtis Johnson, Colony
- Councilmember Mark Howell, Creola
- Councilmember Harold Parmer, Creola
- Mayor Jimmy F. Goodman Sr., Dadeville
- Councilmember Alicia Jo Reese, Daleville
- Councilmember Charles N. Reardon, Flomaton
- Councilmember Bill A. Griffin, Florence
- Mayor Charlie McAlpine, Forkland
- Councilmember Jeff Little, Glencoe
- Councilmember Cindy Cuellar, Irondale
- Councilmember Sherry Laster, Jacksonville
- Councilmember Donna Porter Manasco, Jemison
- Mayor Adrain Dudley, Lake View
- Councilmember Melissa Rodriguez, Leesburg
- Councilmember Cornelius Burrows, Level Plains
- Councilmember Delbert Chandler, Midland City
- Mayor Cynthia Gary, Midland City
- Mayor Mildred K. Whittington, Midway
- Councilmember Lelia Horton Mitchell, Montevallo
- Mayor Jane E. Vick, Myrtlewood
- Mayor Terry L. Burgett, Nauvoo
- Councilmember Natalie Stuckey Moye, Saraland
- Mayor Brandon Van Hook, Semmes
- Councilmember Betty Jeter, Shorter
- Councilmember Shane M. Perry, Spanish Fort
- Councilmember Roy L. Madison, Thomasville
- Councilmember Lisa Bright, Trussville
- Councilmember Carolyn Artis-Brooks, York
- Councilmember Marcus Miller, York
- Councilmember Chandra Mitchell, York

2023 CMA Awards

- Andalusia
- Boligee
- Brewton
- Center Point
- Foley
- Midfield
- Opp
- Priceville
- Robertsdale
- Saraland
- Shorter
- Southside
- York



ALM Celebrates Second Class of EDA Graduates

The League, in partnership with the Alabama Community College System, celebrated 10 communities for graduating from its second class of the Economic Development Academy on November 8, 2023. The graduates include the following municipalities: Brewton, Evergreen, Fairfield, Gardendale, Greensboro, Luverne, Midfield, Priceville, Semmes and Southside.

During the graduation, ACCS announced that every EDA graduate is eligible to earn three hours of college credit from their area community college. This includes EDA graduates from the previous year. So far, 37 communities have graduated from the program.

The 2024 EDA class just held its first meeting of the year in Greenville. The eight municipalities participating in the third class include: Ashland, Birmingham, Brantley, Clanton, Cordova, Flomaton, Helena and York. ■



- Cheryl P. Barton, Brewton
- Carrie R. Brown, Brewton
- Brooke Hartin, Brewton
- Yancey E. Lovelace, Brewton
- Dr. Coretta Boykin, Evergreen
- Jessica Dent, Evergreen
- Kenny Edwards, Evergreen
- Christian C. Jackson, Evergreen
- Stanley Bernard Stallworth, Esq., Evergreen
- Kasey Bradley Vaughan, Evergreen
- Herman Carnes Jr., Fairfield
- Cedric Jason Norman, Fairfield
- Phyllis Oden-Jones, Fairfield
- Eddie J. Penny, Fairfield
- Mary Roberson, Fairfield
- Barakas N. Taylor, Fairfield
- Adam Berendt, Gardendale
- Bill Casaday, Gardendale
- Greg Colvert, Gardendale
- Alvin Currington, Gardendale
- Will Hardman, Gardendale
- Stanley Hogeland, Gardendale
- Melissa Honeycutt, Gardendale
- Bryan C. Knox, Gardendale
- Mary Bragg, Greensboro
- Lorrie Cook, Greensboro
- Coyle French, Greensboro
- Ka-Terraeial Lewis, Greensboro
- Pearl Shepherd, Greensboro
- Johnnie B. Washington, Greensboro
- Samantha Bagwell, Luverne
- Betty Jo Dawson, Luverne
- Kathy P. Smyth, Luverne
- Robyn Snellgrove, Luverne
- Charles Black, Priceville
- Patrick Dean, Priceville
- Melvin Duran III, Priceville
- Ashley W. England, Priceville
- Sam I. Heflin, Priceville
- Tommy Perry, Priceville
- Jason Herring, Semmes
- Helen Joyce, Semmes
- Sharon Murrill, Semmes
- Lisa Owen, Semmes
- Brandon Van Hook, Semmes
- Elizabeth Lovelady, Semmes
- Genny Ball, Southside
- Shane Hamm, Southside
- Joseph Hutchins, Southside
- Nickie Pylant, Southside
- Dana L. Snyder, Southside
- Roderick Clark, Union Springs
- Byron Heaird, Union Springs
- Louis Jerome Murry, Union Springs
- David Padgett, Union Springs
- Jasmine Streeter, Union Springs



Economic Development Academy Graduate Municipalities

The graduate municipalities pictured are:

(Top row) Fairfield, Union Springs and Priceville.

(Middle row) Brewton, Southside and Semmes.

(Bottom row) Gardendale, Greensboro, Evergreen and Luverne.

*Congratulations to your communities,
and good luck in your endeavors!*





2023 DesignAlabama Philip A. Morris Mayors Design Summit Graduates Recognized



On November 8, 2023, the League recognized five mayors who recently graduated from DesignAlabama's Philip A. Morris Mayors Design Summit. The graduates include Mayor Mike Oakley of Centreville, Mayor Rod Northam of Fayette, Mayor Jacqueline Bishop of Fort Deposit, Mayor Brian Baine of Fort Payne and Mayor Richard Phillips of Oneonta.

DesignAlabama programs create engagement between civic leaders, citizens and design professionals. The Philip A. Morris Mayors Design Summit, named in honor of the late director emeritus of DesignAlabama, has brought together mayors and Alabama-based design professionals to thoughtfully examine the planning and design issues facing their communities in an intimate and collaborative setting for the past 17 years. Since then, 85 mayors have participated in the program.

During a reunion meeting of previous participants, ALM Executive Director Greg Cochran and Deputy Director Kayla Bass presented a \$5,000 check to DesignAlabama's Executive Director Gina Clifford to support their mission and help more municipalities benefit from their programs. ■

ALM Deputy Director Kayla Bass and ALM Executive Director Greg Cochran presented a check to DesignAlabama's Executive Director Gina Clifford on November 9, 2023, alongside Jim Byard Jr., founder of Byard Associates, LLC and former Prattville mayor, and Helena Mayor Brian Puckett.



Pictured left to right: ALM Executive Director Greg Cochran, Centreville Mayor Mike Oakley, Fayette Mayor Rod Northam, Fort Payne Mayor Brian Baine and DesignAlabama's Executive Director Gina Clifford

Make plans to join the League for training in 2024!



- February/March/April/June/July: CMO Regional Trainings (February 22 - Montgomery; March 21 - Spanish Fort; April 4 - Troy; June 20 - Vestavia Hills; July 18 - Hartselle)
- February 7: Legislative Advocacy Day, Montgomery - See page 12
- March 10 - 13: NLC Congressional City Conference, Washington, D.C. (Pre-conference activities will begin March 9-10. Learn more: www.nlc.org - See page 19)
- May 15 - 18: Annual Convention and Expo, Huntsville
- August: ALM In-State Congressional Luncheons, (locations and dates TBD)
- October 30 - November 1: Municipal Leadership Institute and League Graduation Ceremonies, Orange Beach
- November 13 - 16: NLC City Summit, Tampa, FL (www.nlc.org)

January - December: Anytime Training (www.almonline.org/AnytimeTraining)

Visit www.almonline.org/UpcomingTraining for training and registration information. Registration for League events opens six - eight weeks prior to the date of the event. *Any municipal official or employee may register for these events, but only elected officials will be awarded credit hours in the Certified Municipal Official Program.*

Scan the QR code to view a video message from our Deputy Director Kayla Bass about the benefits of participating in the CMO Program!







2023 Municipal Leadership Institute November 8-10, 2023





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**Battalion Chief of Safety & Training
David Kennedy**



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ACE Presents 2023 STAR Awards

Lori Johns • Communications Director • ALM

The Alabama League of Municipalities announced the Alabama Communities of Excellence STAR Award recipients at its annual Municipal Leadership Institute and graduation/awards ceremonies on November 8, 2023, in Orange Beach. The League presents the ACE STAR Awards to acknowledge ACE advisory board members, ambassadors, community participants and volunteers who have gone above and beyond in assisting the organization and the communities they serve. The League was honored to present the ACE Star Awards to four well-deserving recipients this year!



Outstanding ACE Mayor Mayor Phil Segraves of Guin

Mayor Segraves was selected for this honor because of his leadership in helping Guin receive its ACE designation in 2005; helping to update downtown Guin to attract new businesses; leading efforts to obtain over a million dollars in grant money for lighting, sidewalks, streets and traffic signal posts; and supporting the creation of four beautiful murals in Guin. He has served as mayor for 19 years. He is a past president of the League and currently serves on its board of directors.



Outstanding ACE Ambassador Melissa Perault of U.S. Dept. of Agriculture's Rural Development Ozark Area Office

Melissa is an avid supporter of ACE. ACE Ambassadors are the boots-on-the-ground experts dispatched to communities during Phase 1 of the program. She has written support letters and participated in all Ozark community meetings involved with their strategic planning process. Additionally, she was integral in helping the ACE program apply, and receive, a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development Grant in 2020. This grant helped 10 ACE communities update their strategic plans over the course of 18 months.



Outstanding ACE Local Coordinator

Holle Smith of the Ozark Dale Co. Economic Development Corporation

This award recognizes a local coordinator which is a community participant appointed local coordinator by the mayor and who has performed exceptionally while participating in the ACE program. The city of Ozark has been working on its designation to become an ACE Community since 2021. Holle skillfully assisted the city in navigating through the ACE process. She also guided a strategic planning initiative, resulting in the establishment of specific goals for the improvement of the city. She plans to keep monitoring their progress to ensure goals are met.



Outstanding ACE Leadership Award

Mayor Sheldon Day of Thomasville

This award recognizes an individual who has provided exceptional leadership for the ACE program. Since he was elected to office in 1996, Mayor Day has strived to promote the city of Thomasville, whether it be economic development, public awareness of the services provided by the city and businesses, improvement in business appearances, promotion of schools and recreation or infrastructure enhancements on the local and state level. He led the city in earning its ACE designation in 2007 and helps to promote and mentor other municipal officials interested in the ACE program. He serves on the League's Board of Directors. ■



The League appreciates the following entities for supporting the ACE Advisory Board in 2023:

- Alabama Department of Commerce • Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs
- Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association • Alabama Municipal Electric Authority
- Alabama Power Company • Alabama Small Business Development Center Network
- Auburn University – Government and Economic Development Institute
- David Mathews Center for Civic Life • Goodwyn, Mills and Cawood, Inc. • Regions Bank • Spire
- The University of Alabama Center for Economic Development • The University of West Alabama
- United States Department of Agriculture – Rural Development (USDA–RD)



Congratulations to our recipients for their well-accomplished work in our ACE Communities! We look forward to next year's Star Awards!

Follow our ACE social media pages:



@ACETOWNS



@alabama-excellence

Apply to Become an Alabama Community of Excellence by April 15!



Mayors of eligible communities, in the 2,000 to 18,000 population range, are invited to apply to become an Alabama Community of Excellence. The ACE program offers a three-phase approach, with technical resources and the tools needed, to help Alabama's small municipalities foster long-term growth and prosperity by focusing on their distinctive assets and resources.

To apply, email Mary Jackson, Education and ACE Coordinator, at mjackson@almonline.org.



For more information about the ACE program, scan this QR code.



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TOP: SITE-BUILT HOME, BOTTOM: MANUFACTURED HOME
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ACE Spotlight: Foley Makes Big Waves in Coastal Alabama



By Lori Jhons • Communications Director • ALM

The Alabama League of Municipalities is pleased to select Foley for this edition’s spotlight on our Alabama Communities of Excellence program! If you have ever driven down to Orange Beach and Gulf Shores, you have probably gone through the city of Foley, located just eight miles north of the Gulf Coast. When I think of Foley, two of the first things that come to mind are a visit to Tanger Outlets and driving past the massive amusement park at OWA. These two places certainly make it a must-see stop on any beach trip, but Foley offers a lot more ranging from its historic downtown to Graham Creek Nature Preserve, which is one of the largest municipally owned nature reserves in the state.

Foley is named after its founder, John B. Foley of Chicago. In 1902, he bought approximately 50,000 acres of land and led an effort to extend the rail line from Bay Minette to Foley. Shortly after gaining rail service, Foley was incorporated in 1915. The Foley Depot helped shape the city into an economic hub for south Baldwin County, warehousing and shipping local farm products. Despite rail service ending in the 1970s, Foley has transformed into an economic driver for the entire region, especially in the years after earning its ACE designation in 2012.

Miriam Boone, Foley’s ACE coordinator, initiated the process to become an ACE Community in 2009. Boone and Foley Mayor Ralph Hellmich, who was serving on the city council at the time, worked with other local leaders to help the city complete the requirements of the program. ACE was created in 2002 to provide resources and knowledge to small communities

across the state to focus on the importance of planning, leadership development and broad-based community engagement. ACE provided Foley’s community leaders with training and workshops to develop a vision and implementation strategies for their city.

Mayor Hellmich said Foley not only had to meet certain high standards and criteria to become an ACE community, but it is continually working toward achieving more progress to maintain its ACE status.

“When you go through the ACE process, you know where you come from and where you are as a city,” Mayor Hellmich said. “ACE provides a comprehensive list of goals that encourages us to be cognizant of multiple ideas that make a city great.”

In the years following its ACE designation, Foley has sought out and welcomed many new projects. In 2012, the city approached the Porch Band of Creek Indians about



a partnership to bring an entertainment destination venue to Baldwin County. That led to the joint venture known as OWA, which means “big water” in the Muskogee Creek language. OWA is a 520-acre family-fun theme park with 23 rides and so much more (heavy emphasis on the more)!

Since opening in 2017, OWA has added a variety of attractions, including the region’s largest indoor water park (with a convertible roof), an outdoor wave pool, a variety of dining and shopping options as well as an arcade, theater, esports center, kid camps and an event venue. Whatever you have an itch for, OWA likely has something to fit your desires. It even has its own small-town themed downtown with pedestrian-only streets along with a hotel and luxury RV park on-site. A \$50 million tropical themed, resort-style hotel is also in the planning stages and is expected to open next year.



The Tribe is the sole owner and developer of OWA, and the city retains ownership of the adjoining \$40 million Foley Sports Tourism Complex, which includes a 90,000 square-foot event center. The outdoor portion of the sports complex opened in 2016 and features 16 natural-grass, multi-purpose fields to accommodate archery, field hockey, flag football, lacrosse, soccer and ultimate (formerly known as Ultimate Frisbee). One of the sports fields is a championship field with stadium seating, a press box and lights to host television broadcasts.

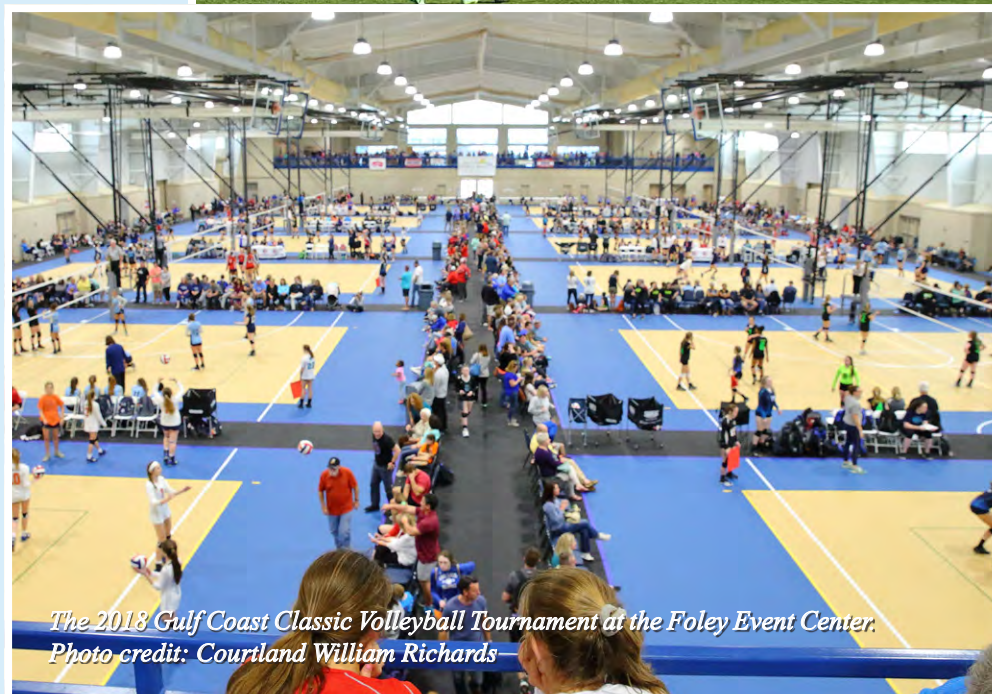
The event center, located across from the outdoor fields, opened in the summer of 2017. It features six competition basketball courts, 12 volleyball courts, 12 pickleball courts and two locker rooms. It has ample space and is designed to accommodate everything from basketball and volleyball to gymnastics and tradeshows. The sports complex sees an estimated 200,000 visitors each year. The city has a goal of becoming one of the top destinations for youth sports tournaments in the country.

Furthermore, the Tanger Outlet Center, which generates a large amount of sales tax, is busier than ever. It features approximately 120 brand-name outlet stores, making it one of the largest outlet malls in the South. The city just opened a Baumhower’s Victory Grille on-site in December. It is the largest location for the brand and will bring approximately 140 jobs to the area. Based on sales, Boone estimates six million people visited the outlets last year.

While the outlets are at the center of commerce for Foley, city leadership is working on creating a more lively downtown. The Foley Downtown Historic District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and contributes greatly to the city’s culture, history and quality of life. Last year, the Foley Railroad Museum and Model Train Exhibit greeted right at 20,000 visitors and the Holmes Medical Museum greeted over 11,000 visitors. These museums are free to the public and are operated by the city to add to the visitor experience downtown.



The Foley Sports Tourism Complex has 16 fields to accommodate several sports, including soccer. Photo credit: Fletcher McKinney



The 2018 Gulf Coast Classic Volleyball Tournament at the Foley Event Center. Photo credit: Couriland William Richards

“We have a very active main street program that has helped add businesses to this historic area in its five years of operation,” LaDonna Hinesley, Foley’s marketing director, said. “The downtown area is becoming more vibrant as the city grows around it.”

The city recently completed the last of nine phases of a more than decade long, \$3 million streetscape program that has helped enhance park trails, street lighting, sidewalks and other revitalization projects in this area. In August, the Foley Main Street District brought home three Awards of Excellence for the progress they are making; one for promotion;

one for planning and public space; and one for historic preservation, during Main Street Alabama’s tenth annual Awards of Excellence Banquet.

In recent years, more people are taking notice of these revitalization efforts and all that Foley has to offer residents – close proximity to the beach, interstates and an airport; a quality public school system; award-winning medical facilities; over 100 restaurant options; 14 parks; an active performing arts community; and an array of entertainment and leisure activities. The mayor said that since the 2000 U.S. Census, Foley has grown from a population of 8,700 to about 25,000. The Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama recently issued a report that listed Foley as the 27th most populous city in the state. Not to mention, the U.S. Census Bureau published a 2023 report that ranks the Daphne-Fairhope-Foley metro area as the 12th-fastest growing metro in the nation.

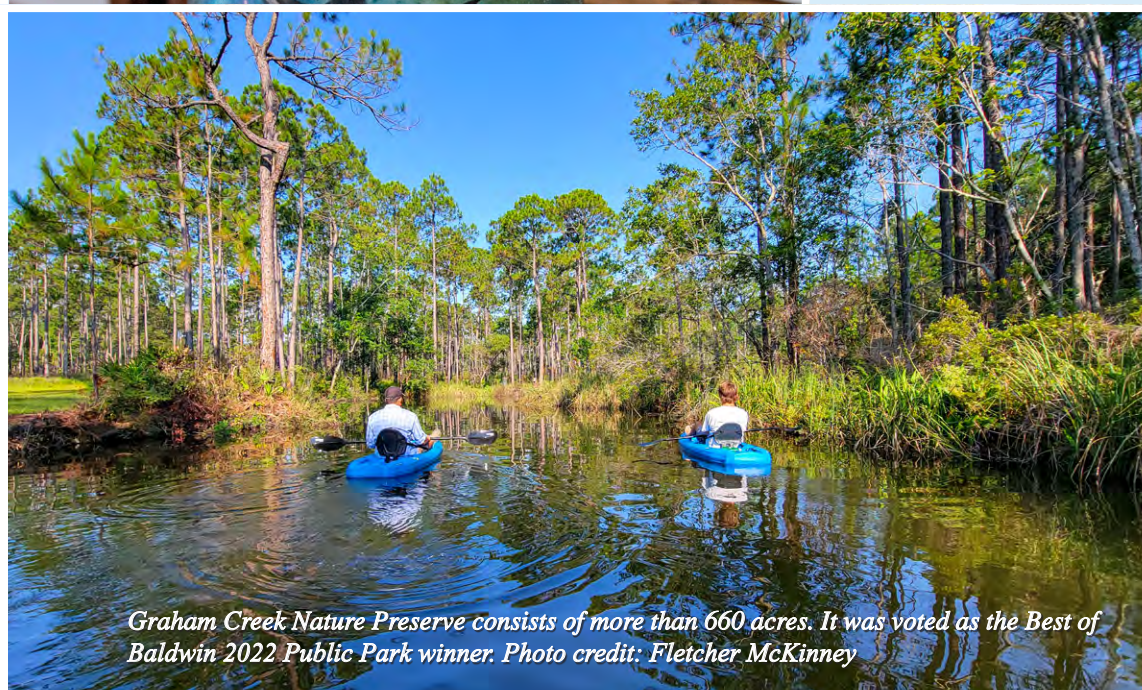
To support all of this growth, the mayor said the city is in the process of creating a new strategic plan that includes not only capital projects and budgeting but citizens’ input for further development as well. They are also updating their 2008 comprehensive plan, which will tie in with the strategic plan. In addition, the city must think regionally when developing these plans.

Mayor Hellmich said, “We are working with ALDOT [Alabama Department of Transportation] and adjacent cities to have better coordination with traffic lights and traffic flow. The city also hosts a monthly meeting with a diverse group of attendees, from Baldwin County and Mobile County, who discuss various issues that affect us all.”

After all public input and research is gathered, the mayor hopes the city can finalize its strategic plan by the summer. Among the top priorities, this plan will include four major projects that are currently in the works. The first consists of building a new \$17 million state-of-the-art public works facility to replace the current



*Foley has over 100 restaurant options.
Photo credit: Natural Images*



Graham Creek Nature Preserve consists of more than 660 acres. It was voted as the Best of Baldwin 2022 Public Park winner. Photo credit: Fletcher McKinney



one, which was built in 1991. The city has outgrown it, and the new campus will give them more space to house several departments while also being more strategic in their severe weather preparedness efforts. Construction began in December. The second project involves renovating and repurposing an old National Guard armory near city hall to offer recreational athletic leagues a space to compete along with giving the city's recreation department more office spaces.

Additionally, the city is working on building a \$20 million library, which will double its current capacity. It will serve traditional purposes as well as provide a combination of activity spaces to match more modern needs. Construction will begin this year and is expected to open next year. Lastly, Foley is in the design phase of building a new aquatics center, which will replace the current city pool that was built in the 1960s. It is estimated to be completed by 2026.

For those that are interested in taking part in the ACE program, Boone shared her biggest takeaway.

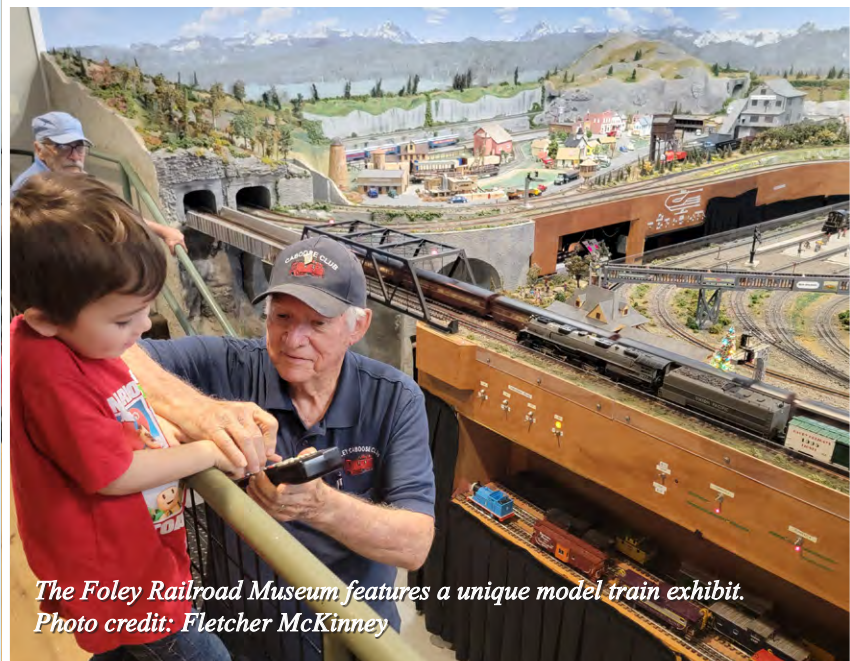
"The ACE program keeps us on a goal-oriented path forward. The staff and other coordinators are always willing to assist, provide advice or just provide a support system," Boone said. "Being able to visit the various communities for training and meetings is most helpful in gaining insights and ideas."

In addition to being active in ACE, Foley was one of the thirteen communities that received the 2023 Municipal Achievement Award, which means that all members of the city council and the mayor have completed at least 40 hours of municipal training in the League's Certified Municipal Official program. Mayor Hellmich also serves as the chair of the League's 2023-2024 Committee on State and Federal Legislation. Just before the start of this year, the city brought home another accolade. The National Park Service named Foley as the American World War II Heritage City for Alabama. This honor was only given to 11 communities across the United States to recognize their contributions to the war effort.

We are proud of Foley for taking part in our programs, representing our state on the highest level and making big waves along our Gulf Coast. We cannot wait to see what the next 10 years have in store for this community! ■



Foley's Tanger Outlet Center is one of the largest outlet malls in the South. Photo credit: Fletcher McKinney



The Foley Railroad Museum features a unique model train exhibit. Photo credit: Fletcher McKinney



The clock tower at Foley's Centennial Plaza is iconic to the community and is often the backdrop for many of their annual outdoor events. Photo credit: Fletcher McKinney

Good Hope Shares EDA Experience



Lori Jhons • Communications Director • ALM

The Alabama League of Municipalities is proud to select the city of Good Hope for this edition's feature story on our Economic Development Academy. Good Hope participated in the League's first class of EDA in 2022. EDA is specifically designed to educate and engage municipal officials on the essential elements and phases of economic development while highlighting their vital role in economic initiatives and projects within their communities. This program was developed, in partnership with the Alabama Community College System, to fill an educational void.

The city of Good Hope is located in the center of Cullman County, about five miles southwest of the city of Cullman (the county seat). It was given its name by some of the first pioneers that settled there, many of whom were Baptists by faith. They established the first church there in 1842, which doubled as a school. When it was incorporated in 1962, Good Hope had a land area of 640 acres and a population of 180 people. Now, it encompasses more than 5,000 sprawling acres with a population of 2,600.

Good Hope's EDA team consisted of Mayor Jerry Barlett, Councilmember Susan Eller, Councilmember Terry Shabel, Councilmember Eric Phillips, Corey Harbison (the city planner and former mayor) and Christie Chamblee (the city clerk). Their backgrounds range from education to accounting to sales and the state legislative branch. This is the type of diversity the program wants EDA teams to consist of so that various professional strengths can assist with developing community plans.

Chamblee has served as the city clerk since 2013 and has nearly three decades of experience in accounting in the private and public sectors.

"The class is a great way to get together and brainstorm with other municipalities to get new ideas and learn about those communities and how they operate," Chamblee said. "A lot of cities across the state face the same issues, and it is nice to gain knowledge and hear things from other perspectives."

Mayor Bartlett said they applied for the program because very few of them had experience in economic development and because they needed more guidance on making proactive plans for a quickly growing area. Good Hope has two exits off of Interstate-65. They opened Exit 305 at the start of 2016. They developed a traffic plan for access around the new interchange and adopted a façade program for buildings located within commercial zones. They have since worked to promote it as the new "happening" exit in Cullman County.

Their plan is in motion. In February 2023, Good Hope broke ground on a new Love's Travel Stop right off the new exit. It will be open 24 hours, seven days a week. It is expected to have a McDonald's, Subway, country store, RV hook-up areas and even a dog wash. It will also be one of the first Love's to feature a double truck wash for tractor-trailers. The

On December 5, 2023, city officials and members of the public cut a ribbon to open their new fitness court.





The city of Good Hope broke ground on a new Love's Travel Stop on February 8, 2023. It will be located right off of Exit 305.

project is expected to be completed next year and will create more than 75 jobs. The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs awarded a \$250,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for the project. Additionally, the city matched that contribution with \$187,000 for sewer infrastructure.

Councilmember Eller serves as the workforce and retail development manager for the Cullman Economic Development Agency and has been instrumental in locating numerous industrial partners to the community. Their agency provides information used to make economic development location decisions, assists with relocation of employees, coordinates announcements, groundbreakings, grand openings and anniversary celebrations.

“My years of experience at my current job has provided a lot of experience. I have seen things that work and things that do not work,” Councilmember Eller said. “It helps me realize what is good for cities the size of Good Hope; it gives me realistic expectations of what Good Hope can accomplish.”

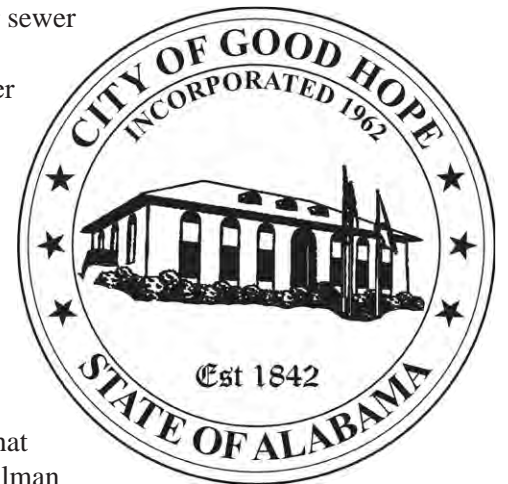
It is important to note that Cullman County has a shared sales tax system that distributes revenue to all municipalities in the county, based on their population. Cullman County is the only county in the state with this type of sales tax distribution system. As Good Hope grows, the entire county benefits.

Two of the main projects that have occurred since Good Hope participated in the EDA program are sewer upgrades and building a new 33-acre park with a playground.

Harbison said that sewer upgrades became a focal point when discussions were first being made about constructing Exit 305. City officials wanted to invest in making all four corners of the interchange suited with sewer infrastructure to recruit new businesses and build up the exit. He said the city just finished their sewer expansion to the west side of this interchange, which completes their goal of getting all four corners prepared.

Furthermore, the city is undergoing a roughly \$3 million sewer plant expansion project. As the city has grown, it has reached its capacity of treating up to 250 gallons of wastewater a day. This expansion will allow them to double their capacity. Harbison said that none of these sewer improvements would have been achievable without financial assistance from ADECA and the Alabama Department of Environmental Management.

In December, the city opened its latest attraction at the community park – a world-class fitness court! This project was made possible by a joint partnership between the city, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama and the National Fitness Campaign. The city contributed \$250,000, BCBS donated \$50,000 and the National Fitness Campaign designed





the outdoor exercise center to match the city’s parks and recreation plans. The court is free to access and is designed for all fitness levels. One side is a fitness court, and the other side is a studio for classes.

The city is working on adding more basketball courts, pickleball courts, walking and cross-country trails, and a splash pad. Mayor Bartlett said they hope to eventually build a multipurpose storm shelter and senior center on-site. Then, they want to construct a bridge that will allow more access to the park’s property.

Prior to his service on the council and becoming mayor in 2014, Mayor Bartlett was an educator and coach for 27 years. He said that gave him a better perspective on how young people view their community.

“They want growth, change and progress for our city,” Mayor Bartlett said. “As mayor, along with our council, we have tried to grow the city and provide new businesses and housing projects so that we can offer our newly graduated students a place to work and live in Good Hope.”

Therefore, the city council passed two planned development zoning measures in 2023 that will allow Good Hope to significantly increase its housing supply. The 30-acre Mize Meadows subdivision is currently being built along Mize Road and will create 185 homes. The Doc Clemmons subdivision will lie along Doc Clemmons Road on the city’s eastern side. It is a 38-acre development that will create more than 140 homes. The aforementioned sewer improvements will be critical for these developments.

Mayor Bartlett and the rest of the EDA team said they plan to use the skills and lessons learned through the program to continue looking for opportunities to enhance their city. Good luck, Good Hope! ■

City of Good Hope Council pictured left to right: Greg Brown, Susan Eller, Eric Phillips, Terry Shabel, Mayor Jerry Bartlett and Taft Dillashaw



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The League Welcomes Two New Staff Members in 2024!



Ashlen Nettles, ALM Legal Services Executive Assistant



Ashlen is a Montgomery native and Faulkner University graduate with a bachelor's degree in legal studies. She brings over a decade of legal experience to the Alabama League of Municipalities legal department. With a robust background as a paralegal and legal administrator, she served as the executive assistant to the mayor and city manager of Tuskegee, AL, gaining valuable municipal experience.

Ashlen's commitment to the community extends beyond her professional roles; she is passionate about fostering growth and positive change within the capital city. Her previous involvement as the administrative coordinator at Manufacture Alabama showcases her dedication to both associations and legislative matters.

Outside of her professional endeavors, she finds joy in traveling, inspirational content creation, and creating cherished memories with her husband Eric, their four wonderful children and three pups. ■

Will Strength, AMIC/MWCF Loss Control Manager



Will was named the loss control manager for the Loss Control Division of the Alabama Municipal Insurance Corporation and the Municipal Workers Compensation Fund on January 1, 2024. He is responsible for overseeing day-to-day operations for the Loss Control Division. Will has 16 years of experience in the insurance industry.

Prior to being named the loss control manager for AMIC and MWCF, Will held the position of account executive for AMIC, where he provided sales and customer service for accounts in the southern territory. Will first joined the League's Loss Control Division in early 2008 as a loss control representative, where he provided loss control services in the central and western regions of the state for 11 years. In his time with MWCF and AMIC, Will has earned an Associate in Risk Management for Public Entities (ARM-P), Certified Insurance Counselor (CIC), and Associate in Reinsurance (ARe) designations.

Will and his wife, Dawn, are members of Hunter Hills Church of Christ and live in Prattville. They have three precious children: Cody, Abby and Ben. ■

The League Wishes Sharon Carr a Happy Retirement!

Sharon Carr, a Montgomery native, retired from the League as legal services administrator on December 31, 2023. Sharon joined the League's staff in 2002 as a receptionist before transitioning to the legal department as legal services administrator. Our current and previous attorneys will tell you that Sharon was the gatekeeper for the legal office and was instrumental to their operations. From assisting the legal staff with their everyday needs to maintaining the Alabama Association of Municipal Attorneys/Alabama Municipal Judges Association membership database and coordinating legal conferences, Sharon played a major role in the League assisting our municipalities. Happy retirement, Sharon! *Your League family will miss you.*





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