

Fall 2021 Volume 79, Issue 2

The Alabama

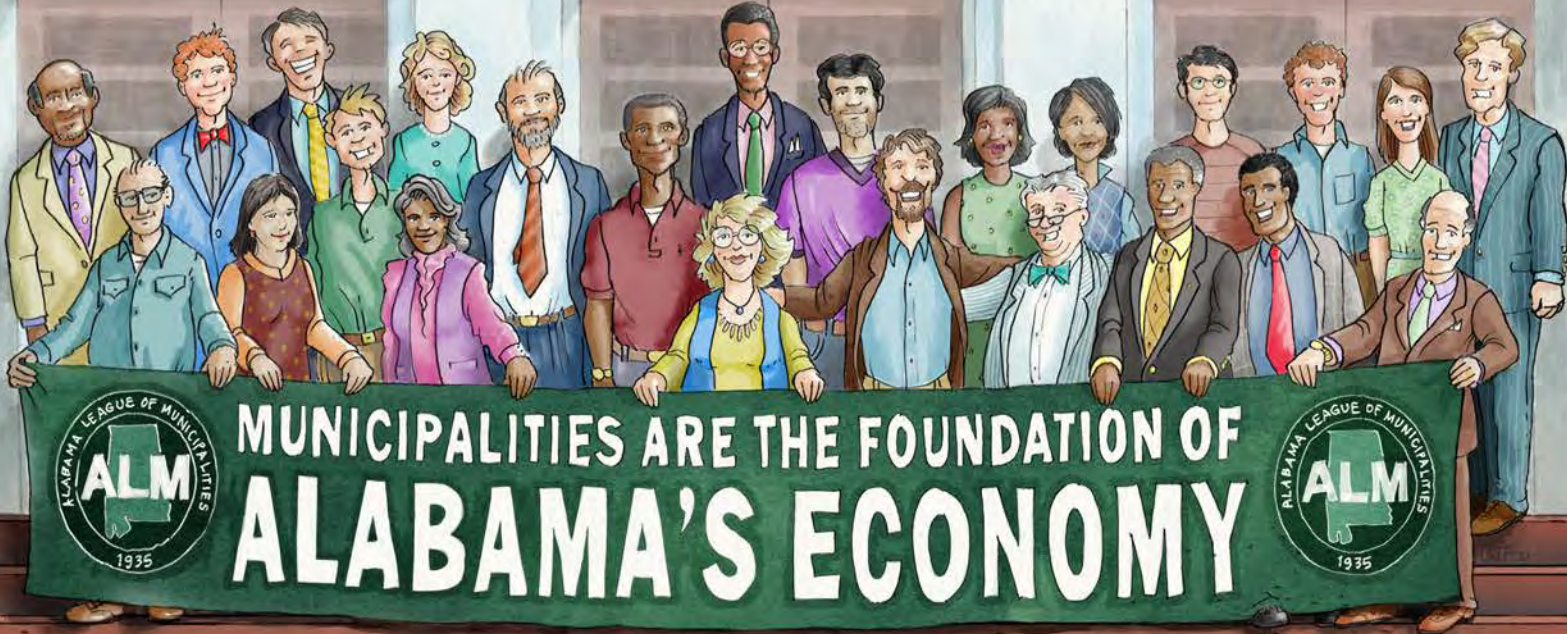
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Official publication of the Alabama League of Municipalities

Fall 2021 • Volume 79, Issue 2

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On the Cover:

After a socially distanced legislative session that required many virtual conversations and a lot of creative collaboration, ALM looks forward to an in-person 2022 Regular Session where both our staff and members can directly interact with Alabama's lawmakers.

Productive Summer Leads to Busy Fall Training Schedule

Gregory D. Cochran • Executive Director

This summer, the League's staff hit the road and traveled across the state to bring relevant trainings, resources and networking opportunities to our members.

In June and July, the League's Legal Team led six one-day CMO regional trainings focused on the fundamentals of municipal government. These were held in Montgomery (twice), Alabaster, Athens, Guntersville and Orange Beach. We are extremely pleased that more than 200 officials attended a training in one of the six locations – proving that not only were these trainings a great way to strengthen core training in municipal government, but that they also provided an opportunity for officials to satisfy their core curriculum requirements in one year. We appreciate the excellent work our Legal and Membership teams did to provide an intentional curriculum that ensured our municipalities are receiving the education they need to be their best selves.

In August, the League's Advocacy Team hosted seven in-state Congressional luncheons across the state to provide municipal officials a unique opportunity to network with their congressional delegation and staff as well as their state lawmakers. More than 500 officials attended one of the seven luncheons to discuss the opportunities and challenges facing municipal government with their federal and state delegation. We appreciate every municipal official, congressional member/staff, lawmaker and strategic/community partner who took time away from their jobs, communities and families to join us. Events like this are only a success when we *all* show up in unison to ensure that the voice of municipal government is heard.

Additionally, our six standing committees met in September to hear from state and federal resource advisors about pertinent legislative topics ahead of the 2022 Regular Legislative Session. We look forward to sharing an overview of these meetings with you in the *Winter Journal*.

Looking ahead, the League will be offering several training and networking opportunities we hope you will take advantage of and find worthwhile.

The League's Municipal Leadership Institute (MLI) is presented every fall and features the top legal and administrative authorities on municipal government in Alabama. This year's Institute, scheduled for November 1-3 in Montgomery, focuses on *Building a Strong Community and Workforce Through Education*. Topics and discussions include: Preparing Students to be Active, Energized Citizens; Workforce Development for a Better Future; and Building a Workforce in Your Community with Skills on Wheels. The program also includes sessions dedicated to the American



During ALM's July board meeting, President Mayor Gary Fuller of Opelika recognized Executive Director Greg Cochran for 25 years of exemplary service to the League and its member municipalities and for his "leadership, guidance and dedication, particularly in representing its members at the state and federal levels, championing many legislative initiatives on behalf of municipal government that ultimately became law while always safeguarding against legislation detrimental to cities and towns."

Rescue Plan with an emphasis on how to leverage rescue dollars for your community and understanding reporting and compliance requirements. Those interested in attending the Institute can register online at www.almonline.org. In addition, our Annual Advocacy Day programming is well underway and scheduled for January 19th in downtown Montgomery. For more information, see page 7.

In other exciting news, the League's building renovations are complete! For more than a year, the League's headquarters has undergone an extensive renovation to include a redesigned conference room, state-of-the-art technology, re-imagined office space to accommodate more employees and a modern lounge and waiting area for municipal officials and guests. This has been a major investment and would not have been possible without the leadership of our board of directors. I want to thank them for entrusting us with this project, and I want to thank the staff for their patience throughout the last year. I hope that next time you're in downtown Montgomery you will stop by to visit our new space!

Lastly, the NLC City Summit will be held virtually again this year. The conference dates have shifted slightly, to limit virtual meeting time on the weekend. The main City Summit conference will take place November 17-19. The pre-conference events (which include committee meetings, board meetings and Executive Education sessions) will occur November 12th, 15th and 17th. Registration will be open through November 19th via www.nlc.org.

As always, we appreciate your engagement with our organization throughout the year. ■

Leadership Perspective

Mayor Gary Fuller • Opelika • ALM President



This past August, the League's Advocacy Team organized seven Congressional luncheons throughout the state, including one in Opelika. This was our first time trying this approach, which was intentionally planned as a way for municipal officials to have the opportunity to meet and greet with our Congressional delegations and their staffs, as well as our state lawmakers and their staffs, in a casual setting.

Following months of shutdowns that essentially eliminated in-person access to our congressional and legislative leaders – and given our ongoing challenges with COVID – we should all have a much greater appreciation for the opportunity to fellowship together in the same room instead of through computer screens. Politics is a people endeavor. While technology can – and does – enhance our reach and effectiveness, it will never supercede the importance of relationships derived from direct interaction in settings that allow for natural conversation, idea exchanges and the opportunity to share an experience, a success story or specific issues and concerns where the nuance and emotion is seen and felt instead of translated through pixels on a screen.

Since the State House was closed to the public during the 2021 legislative session and travel to DC was limited, our team thought late summer luncheons would be a great way to remind us just how important developing and maintaining personal, lasting relationships with our state and federal delegations is to us as we work with our constituents daily, not remotely. They were also a good way to put us on course for the 2022 Regular Session – for us to start thinking about how we can not only help our own communities but assist the League with legislative challenges and initiatives that affect us all.

Folks, I've been serving my city for many years. Relationships are the make-or-break factor in every aspect of life but particularly in the political realm. While our League staff is made up of 25 exceptional professionals, we must not expect them to do all the lifting for us. They often open doors we didn't know existed. We must be willing to walk into the room and be part of the conversation. There are many challenges and opportunities awaiting us during the 2022 legislative session. Let's make sure our voices are heard and our municipalities are protected. Thank you for your leadership and your support! ■



Mayor Lawrence "Tony" Haygood, Jr. • Tuskegee • ALM Vice President

Our upcoming Municipal Leadership Institute (MLI) scheduled for November 1-3 in Montgomery will not only cover a variety of timely topics, it will culminate with our annual Certified Municipal Official (CMO) graduation ceremony. This year marks the 26th graduating class from a program that was launched in 1994 and has grown to more than 4700 officials enrolled since its inception. This signature League program has grown considerably since the first class graduated in 1996 – beginning with a basic CMO certification that has expanded to Advanced certification and then to the highest level at CMO Emeritus. The program was developed as a voluntary educational service provided to mayors and councilmembers who wish to receive formal training in municipal government. Credit hours are earned by attending League CMO sessions as well as other approved League training, National League of Cities (NLC)

conferences or through service on League committees and boards. Outside credit is also awarded for attendance at approved seminars. Officials who earn 40 credit hours in the program are awarded the designation of **Certified Municipal Official**. With an additional 40 credit hours, officials receive the **Advanced CMO** designation. **CMO Emeritus**, which began in 2015, is awarded to officials who have completed a minimum of 120 credit hours of Continuing CMO Education plus 15 points. Points can be earned by participating on ALM standing committees and attending specific ALM and NLC events.

I am proud to be part of the 2021 graduating class on November 3rd where I will receive my Emeritus designation. I truly believe every municipal official should be taking advantage of our CMO program. While 454 of our 464 incorporated municipalities are enrolled in the CMO program, only 52 percent of our elected officials are actively participating. If you're not enrolled, please reach out to the League and enroll immediately. There is also plenty of information about the program online at almonline.org. If you're already enrolled, please participate! You will earn CMO credit for attending MLI in November. Education begets knowledge. Knowledge is not only a personal tool, it's an investment in your community. ■

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Alabama Activity Center • 201 Dexter Avenue • Downtown Montgomery

Wednesday, January 19 • 8:00 a.m. – 4:15 p.m. • Reception at Alabama State Archives 5:00 – 6:00 p.m.

www.almonline.org to register

The League's Annual Municipal Advocacy Day is specifically designed to allow municipal officials to share their ideas and concerns with the state's political leadership. It is important that the vital role our municipalities play in economic development, community enhancement and quality of life is repeatedly articulated to our state representatives. The League's Municipal Advocacy Session provides a unique opportunity each year for municipal leaders to discuss their messages with their legislative delegations – and for the power of the ALM membership's collective voice to be heard. **A special legislative reception has been scheduled at the Alabama Department of Archives and History at 624 Washington Avenue across from the Capitol.**

8:00 – 9:00 a.m.	Registration: Alabama Activity Center
9:00 – 9:10 a.m.	Welcome <i>Mayor Mark Saliba, Dothan, Chair, Committee on State & Federal Legislation;</i> <i>Greg Cochran, Executive Director, ALM</i>
9:10 – 10:30 a.m.	Senate and House Leadership Panels
10:30 – 10:45 a.m.	Break
10:45 – Noon	Grant Writing Boot Camp
Noon – 2:00 p.m.	Lunch on Your Own
2:00 – 3:00 p.m.	Social Media Best Practices <i>Brian Key, Partner and Director of Client Solutions, Copperwing</i>
3:00 – 3:15 p.m.	Break
3:15 – 4:15 p.m.	Alabama Politics: Media Musings <i>Todd Stacy, Alabama Daily News</i>
5:00 – 6:00 p.m.	Legislative Reception at the Alabama Department of Archives and History

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

CMO Credit: This session has been approved for a total of four and one-half (4.5) 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.

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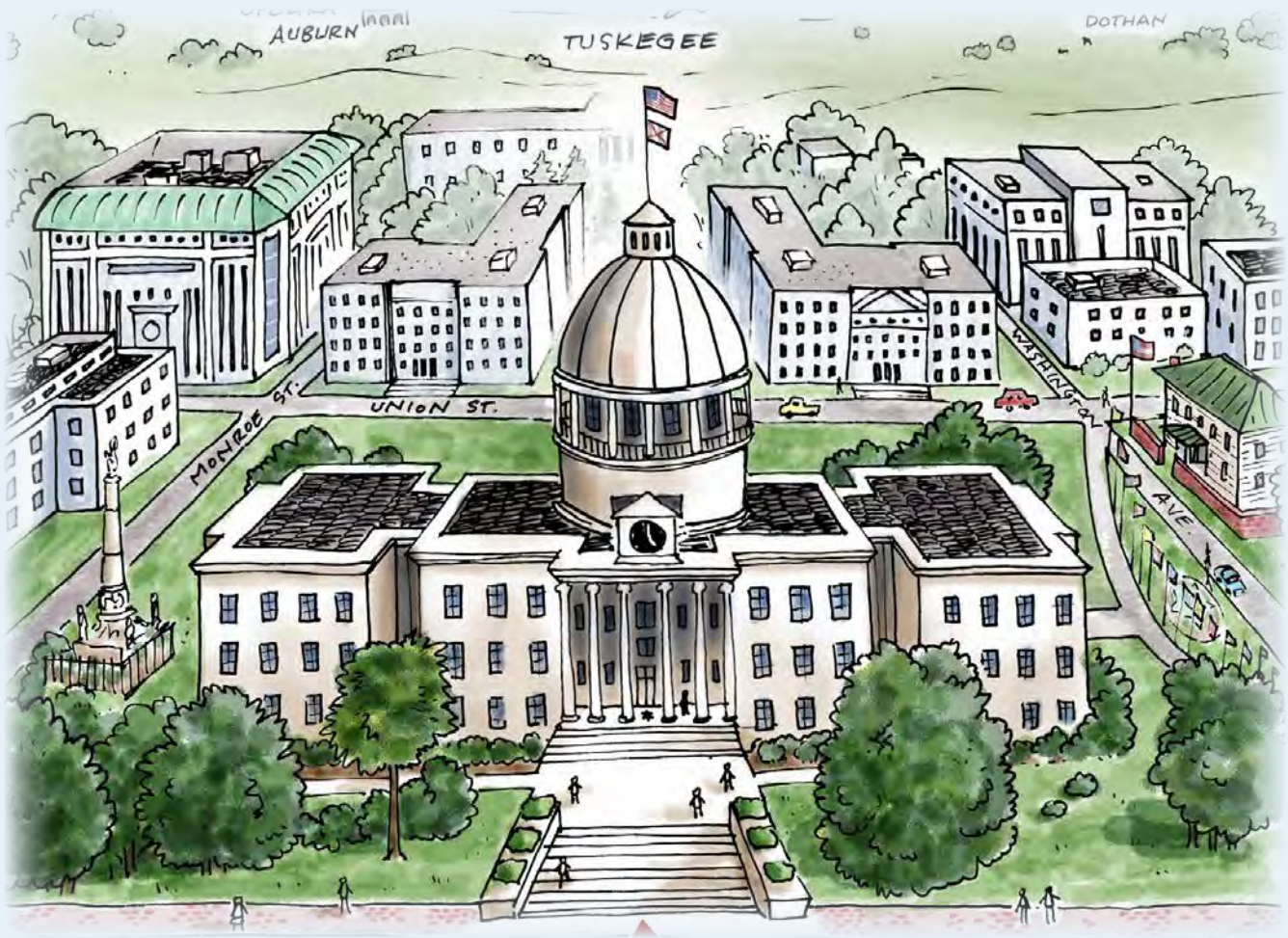
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Bills and Laws: A Legislative Primer

Lori Lein • General Counsel • ALM



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.

Whether this is your first term in municipal office or you've been in office for multiple terms, it is extremely important 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 which resides 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.

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Municipal Elections Moved Off Presidential Election Cycle



On June 22nd, Governor Kay Ivey held a ceremonial bill signing for League bill SB-119, which revised Alabama's municipal elections by moving nearly all elections in Alabama's cities and towns off the presidential election cycle where they have resided on the calendar since 1984. ALM appreciates the bill sponsors Sen. Jabo Waggoner (R-Vestavia Hills) and Rep. Jim Hill (R-Odenville) as well as Governor Ivey signing the bill into law. Cities and towns affected by the new law will hold their next elections in August 2025 and will hold elections every four years thereafter. Candidate qualifying was moved from July to June to provide more time for confirmation of a candidate's eligibility. Additionally, elections runoffs were shortened from six weeks to four weeks, which mirrors runoffs in state and county elections. One issue the legislation had to address was the fact that four-year terms are currently being served by mayors and councilmembers. To avoid any constitutional problems, the legislation grants a one-time extension of current terms by 12 months to line those terms up with a 2025 election. Pictured left to right: ALM Director of Governmental Affairs Bryan Parker, ALM Director of External Affairs Kayla Bass, ALM General Counsel Lori Lein, ALM President Mayor Gary Fuller (Opelika), Governor Kay Ivey, Sen. Jabo Waggoner, ALM Director of Policy and Research Baker Allen and ALM Executive Director Greg Cochran.

VACCINATION POLICIES By Rob Johnston • Assistant General Counsel • ALM

The Governor recently signed into law Act 2021-493 addressing proof requirements of COVID-19 vaccines. The Act generally: (1) prohibits state or local governments from issuing or requiring the publication or sharing of immunization records not otherwise required by law; (2) prohibits state or local entities from requiring vaccination or proof of vaccination as a condition for receiving government services or for entry into a government building, unless the vaccination is otherwise required by Alabama law; and (3) prohibits private businesses from requiring vaccination or proof of vaccination as a condition for purchasing goods or service or obtaining admission to a private building.

On August 3, 2021, the Alabama Attorney General issued a public notice addressing the application of Act 2021-493 to several educational institution policies based on the COVID-19 vaccine status. The Attorney General viewed each issue on whether an exemption from a burdensome policy mandated proof of vaccination. Stated another way, the Attorney General analyzed each issue with the view as to whether the college offered a benefit so significant that it discouraged or deterred a person of ordinary firmness from exercising the statutory right to withhold their vaccination status, and thereby penalized those who assert it.

One of the issues addressed a policy where an educational institution reimbursed several hundred dollars' worth of fees and lifted restrictions on students who presented proof of vaccination. The Attorney General concluded that relief from a school's fee requirement and restrictions would likely deter an ordinary person from withholding vaccination status. As such, the Attorney General concluded the policy would likely violate the Act.

The Attorney General, however, determined that other less burdensome policies would likely not violate the Act. A mask policy for classes that do not achieve 100% vaccination was considered voluntary and not coerced. Also, a policy where student-athletes who do not provide proof of vaccination would have to take multiple COVID-19 tests per week would likely not violate the Act as long as the policy was not a "condition of attendance" and the student could still access the goods and services offered by the school.

While the Attorney General's public notice addressed only educational institutional policies, we believe it offers guidance for municipalities who are considering policies involving COVID-19 vaccinations. The guidance suggests a municipality can adopt policies that apply to vaccinations, but the policies must be carefully written to avoid unlawfully penalizing the unvaccinated. Municipalities may not impose conditions that would amount to a significant fee, penalty or other negative employment action for those who refuse to show proof of vaccination. ■

Alabama's Best Days Are Yet to Come

Governor Kay Ivey



It has been a hard year. Almost in the blink of an eye, COVID-19 changed our way of life in a multitude of different ways. However, Alabamians proved their resilience and stepped up to the plate.

While responding to the pandemic was critical to keep folks physically safe and healthy, it came at a cost to our economy and our social interactions. Due to the swift action of the Trump Administration and our federal delegation, we were able to utilize CARES Act funding to help prop up our economy. The Revive Alabama and the Revive + small business grant programs were utilized by many to help span the tide of last year.

The good news is we are in a much better place now than we were this time last year. Thanks to Operation Warp Speed, we have a safe, effective vaccine that represents our best chance at putting this thing behind us and getting back on track. Unfortunately, there's a lot of folks out there who are hesitant and skeptical of the vaccine, because there's so much misinformation circulating. Let me be clear: Imposing new mandates will not defeat COVID-19. Wearing masks will not defeat COVID-19 and keeping our students from in-classroom learning will not defeat COVID-19. We have a shot that works. I've had it, it's painless and it can save your life. Although I strongly urge you to get vaccinated, I can equally assure you that I will never support any kind of state or federal mandate that requires you to get vaccinated, which is why I signed the vaccine passport ban into law.

Please speak to a trusted physician about the vaccine and its safety. It's important that we take the opinions of our medical professionals into account and give them greater preference than the disinformation that's flooding the internet. For well over a year, we prayed for a vaccine that could end this horrific virus. We now have that vaccine, and it's safe, highly effective, and readily available. While this is certainly a personal decision, your choice could potentially have deadly repercussions for every individual with whom you come into contact. I respectfully and humbly ask if you have held out in receiving the shot to please reconsider.

Alabama's vaccination rate has long been the subject of seemingly endless media scrutiny. Unsurprisingly, the media is far more concerned with reporting our shortcomings instead of where our state is thriving. If you check the numbers, you will see that Alabama is currently experiencing one of the most rapid economic rebounds in the country. At the height of the pandemic, our unemployment rate went from an all-time low to the highest it's been in over 37 years. I'm proud to say that because of a lot of collaboration amongst various state agencies, the legislature and our partners in the private sector, we've been able to safely put Alabamians back to work faster than just about every other state in the country. We currently boast the lowest unemployment rate in the southeast, we're well below the national average, and our Department of Labor is reporting that there are more available jobs now than prior to the pandemic. This incredible turnaround has nothing to do with luck. It's happening because through our state's public/private partnerships, we've laid a rock-solid economic foundation that no pandemic or natural disaster can tear down. We're rapidly developing and reimagining our workforce to compete in the 21st century economy, jumping into the innovation economy with both feet, and doing all that is in our power to ensure Alabama continues its upward trajectory.

The success of Alabama truly begins with the success of our cities. As the old saying goes, "all politics is local" and that's true. The success of our state is truly driven by the advocacy and collaboration to advance policy at the local level. We could not achieve anything noteworthy on the state level without strong partnerships with our cities and towns. The Alabama League of Municipalities plays a vital role in keeping these partnerships strong, and I'm proud to know I can always count on your organization. Alabama's best days are yet to come, and I look forward to collaborating with our state's local leaders to ensure we continue to succeed! ■

Keeping Alabama's Economy Strong Requires Legislative Focus on Small Businesses

Lt. Governor Will Ainsworth

The coronavirus pandemic disrupted the lives of billions of people around the globe, but among the groups most dramatically affected were small business owners, who seemingly overnight were ordered to lay off their employees and shutter the doors of their livelihoods, many of which never opened again.

At the same time, however, big box stores, national chains and large corporations were allowed to continue operations and drain even more commerce away from locally-owned mom-and-pop operations.

As a small business owner, I have firsthand experience in dealing with the daily obstacles that government bureaucracy, nonsensical tax policies, cumbersome employment laws and other factors place in the path of job creators. Simply keeping the doors open and allowing workers to remain gainfully employed is often a struggle for many business owners, so the forced shutdown added a toxic measure of insult to injury.

In my role as lieutenant governor, I have statutory authority over the Alabama Small Business Commission, a 22-member panel that was created by the Legislature in 2019 and tasked with formulating “policies encouraging innovation of small businesses in the state” and advising the Department of Commerce in promoting small businesses within Alabama.

Shortly after COVID infection rates indicated a downward trend in 2020, Gov. Ivey asked me to put together the Alabama Small Business Commission Emergency Task Force, which prepared the blueprint that was used to reopen our state’s economy and placed a particular emphasis on allowing small businesses to resume operations safely. Our report allowed stores, restaurants, entertainment venues and businesses of all sizes to once again open their doors because we realized that when it comes to restarting our economy and putting people back to work, every business is an essential business.

I also strongly supported passage of a new law that was enacted earlier this year and allows businesses and places of worship to remain open during future emergencies as long as they comply with any orders, rules or regulations issued by the governor and state or local agencies.

But even though small businesses remain open and protected today, the work of the commission is far from over.

After holding a series of listening sessions in Auburn, Tuscaloosa, Guntersville and other areas across the state, our commission gathered the top concerns and desires of small business owners and developed legislation that will be introduced during the 2022 regular session. Among the bills we plan to offer is a measure that exempts the first \$40,000 of business personal property, excluding real estate, from taxation and another that creates a separate question and answer hotline within the Alabama Department of Revenue for the exclusive use of small business owners. Other pieces of small business-related legislation will follow, as well.

Alabama’s economy has been among the most robust in the nation for the past several years, and even at the height of the pandemic, when other states were struggling financially, we remained fiscally strong. I am confident that the secret ingredient to keeping our economy humming on all cylinders is a renewed and continuing focus on the small business sector and its needs.

The 2022 session will also see my office carry on its efforts in the area of licensure reciprocity, which is a priority of the Alabama Military Stability Commission that I chair. The commission was created to ensure Alabama remains poised to both retain and expand the extensive federal military presence that dots our state from Fort Rucker in Ozark to Maxwell/Gunter in Montgomery to the Army Depot in Anniston to Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville and other locations in between.

The federal military bases located in Alabama play an important role in our state’s economy and job climate, so protecting and expanding their footprint must always be a top priority. The cities and counties that house military bases also know their importance in providing employment opportunities and revenues in local economies.

Our commission passed an extensive and far-reaching military stability package during the 2021 Regular Session that included legislation allowing military dependents attending public colleges and universities in Alabama to pay in-state tuition while stationed here. Another bill extended the enrollment deadline for military families to apply for magnet

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Building on 2021 for 2022 Session

Senate Pro Tem Greg Reed

The 2021 legislative session was unprecedented in the challenges it posed and the way it changed the landscape in which the legislature operates. Legislators and legislative staff wore masks, the public faced restrictions to access the State House and we had a backlog of priority legislation that needed to be addressed since the 2020 session was cut short.

Despite all these challenges, I am proud of the way the Senate conducted itself, adapted to the constantly changing circumstances caused by the pandemic, and the long list of extraordinary accomplishments we were able to deliver to the people of Alabama. These accomplishments included a broad range of topics. We passed legislation to help our state recover economically from the pandemic by ensuring federal stimulus dollars can't be taxed by the state and by providing a liability shield against frivolous lawsuits related to the pandemic.

We reauthorized the Jobs Act and the Growing Alabama Act to help our state's ability to recruit jobs and businesses to Alabama and to support our mission to grow the state's economy. We passed a package of bills designed to retain, safeguard and improve the military presence and investment across Alabama – which I know is important to municipalities across the state that enjoy the economic impact provided by our military. And to address one of the most critical challenges in our state, we passed a bill to develop a connectivity plan to expand broadband access and provide these critical services to those in rural and underserved areas.

These are just a few of the accomplishments of last year's session, and we plan to use this as a benchmark for our aggressive approach towards delivering as many wins to the state of Alabama as possible.

The Legislature has several important tasks in front of us. One issue that is critically important is exploring how we can best utilize the large amount of federal dollars going to states to recover from the pandemic. Last year, our competent

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2022 Session Promises a Busy Agenda for Lawmakers

Speaker Mac McCutcheon

The traditional rules in politics advise lawmakers of both parties to avoid complex and controversial issues during the final year of a quadrennium and focus their attention, instead, on popular topics that attract votes, but I have always subscribed to the notion that in order to win a race, you have to run through the tape, not to the tape.

Alabama is faced with many problems that are seeking solutions, and we simply cannot afford to stand idly by and await the election cycle to pass. Our focus is needed now, and pressing matters must be addressed.

Perhaps no issue threatens the public safety and well-being of our citizenry more than the conditions within our state prison system. By the time the gavel falls to convene the 2022 Regular Session, it is my hope that Legislature will have already met in special session and made major progress in addressing Alabama's substandard prison infrastructure and improving the medical and mental health services that we provide to incarcerated inmates. But even if those improvements are already well underway, the regular session will demand that we focus upon additional criminal justice reforms, such as sentencing guidelines and the pardons and paroles process. Doing that, however, will require us to strike a balance between keeping the prison population at a manageable level and ensuring that those who pose a clear and present danger to the public safety remain firmly held behind bars.

The on-going COVID pandemic continues to raise great concerns both here, in Alabama and across the globe, and it, too, must be fully confronted when our lawmakers meet. During the 2021 session, we passed a joint House and Senate

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Looking Ahead at 2022 Legislative Priorities

Senate Majority Leader Clay Scofield

Following the 2020 legislative session that came to a sudden, unprecedented halt, Senate Republicans approached the 2021 session with a spirit of determination, ready to help move our state forward on the road to recovery following several setbacks brought upon by the pandemic. Working with Governor Kay Ivey, the Senate and House collaborated and identified three priority pieces of legislation to deliver much-needed economic relief including to provide businesses, nonprofits, LLCs, health care providers, educational entities, churches, governmental entities and cultural institutions operating in Alabama, as well as individuals associated with these groups; legal protection from frivolous lawsuits related to the pandemic; to ensure that COVID-relief funds received from the federal government were exempt from state taxes; and to recruit jobs, businesses and economic opportunity to the state. Legislators worked swiftly to

pass these key bills in the first two weeks of the session, demonstrating to the people of Alabama that we would deliver significant results to assist in their recovery.

The work that Senate Republicans chose to prioritize this past session will have a tremendous impact on the future of our state. The Senate passed various bills that will bring substantial relief to businesses and individuals, expand broadband connectivity, protect our Second Amendment rights, safeguard the integrity of our elections and enhance the quality of life for Alabamians in a variety of different ways. As we identify our goals for the 2022 legislative session, our focus will rest on a pro-business, pro-growth agenda, positioning Alabama to remain competitive on a national stage. We will propose additional legislation to create solutions that address the lack of high-speed internet access in rural and unserved communities, and we will allocate federal funds appropriately, concentrating on projects that contain a return on investment if possible. These issues have been and will continue to be some of our Caucus' top priorities. Senate Republicans will remain steadfast in our efforts to develop an environment where business thrives, jobs are generated and a modern, robust infrastructure supports our economy.

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It's Time to Move Alabama Forward

Senate Minority Leader Bobby Singleton

The 2022 Legislative Session will include some old and new topics. Prisons, Medicare Expansion, Broadband, and Redistricting will each play a major part once we reconvene in Montgomery in January. Additionally, gaming, a lottery and criminal justice reform will be heavily debated topics by each body.

With increasing pressure from the U.S. Department of Justice and multiple failed attempts to remedy the problems, we must come up with a solution to the overcrowding, understaffing and inhumane conditions which our prisoners and corrections officers are subjected to each day. We have kicked this can down the road for far too long, and the time has come for us to act or have the Alabama Department of Corrections taken over by the federal government.

As the Senate Minority Leader, my party has been fighting for Medicaid expansion for more than 12 years. We must provide medical insurance for our underemployed workers and our temporary workers who are not offered benefits even though they work full-time. Additionally, we must stop allowing companies to come into our state and instead of offering full-time jobs with benefits, rely instead on a temporary workforce and make no long-term commitments to the people in these communities, even though the state has made a long-term commitment to the company by offering tax incentives and, in many cases, site preparation. Our citizens deserve better. These workers are paying taxes, and the state is not providing them the support and services they need in return for their investment.

Furthermore, the expansion of Medicaid would lead to more high-paying jobs for medical professionals and expand medical services in rural Alabama, where our citizens are disproportionately affected by untreated high blood pressure and diabetes. The matching funds would pay for countless improvements at existing hospitals and allow Alabama to move its entire healthcare system forward, not just those in the Birmingham area. Additionally, we need to expand mental health care for those suffering from chronic and debilitating diagnoses, alcoholism and drug addiction. These issues do not and

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Legislature Must Continue Prioritizing Mental Health, Broadband Access and Rural Development to Make a Great State Even Better

House Majority Leader Nathaniel Ledbetter



As the 2018-2022 quadrennium draws to a close, I believe it is incumbent upon the Legislature to complete the important initiatives in areas like mental health, rural broadband and rural development that we began in previous sessions.

While the COVID pandemic certainly affected our timetable and forced an adjustment in focus, our constituents have an expectation that we finish what we started. At the same time, improving living conditions, medical care and mental health services within our correctional facilities must also take priority in order to prevent a wholesale federal takeover of the state prison system.

Prior to the start of the 2020 regular session, I unveiled a legislative package designed to expand, improve and increase funding for Alabama's mental health system, and it represented the first major reform effort in that area since the administration of Gov. Lurleen Wallace in 1967. Though COVID forced a lengthy break in the middle of the session, we were still able to pass bills that required school systems to employ mental health coordinators, mandated crisis intervention training and continuing education for law enforcement officers and increased the number of 24-hour crisis care centers with new facilities in Birmingham/Tuscaloosa, Huntsville, Mobile and Montgomery. We followed up those efforts in 2021 by establishing a funding mechanism for K-12 public school employees to undergo mental health training, and we added \$26 million to the budget for mental health services in prisons.

Even with the significant forward momentum and progress we have already made, I believe the Legislature can still do more, and I am confident that making access to mental healthcare easier for all Alabamians will begin to reduce the strain on our state prisons, county jails and city lockups, many of which are filled with individuals who could change their

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Looking to 2022: How the Legislature Can Do Better for Every Community

House Minority Leader Anthony Daniels



As we continue to face the challenges and uncertainty of a public health crisis, now with growing cases of the delta variant, Alabama leaders and lawmakers must show that we've learned the lessons of the recent past. More importantly, we must have the courage, resolve and wherewithal to act on them for the good of all Alabama families, communities and municipalities.

In the face of an evolving pandemic, the 2022 legislative session calls on Alabama leaders and lawmakers to evolve our traditional ways of thinking and governing. The upcoming session presents a chance to do just that – put politics aside and embrace the potential for every business and city to recover stronger than ever.

First, to keep our economic recovery and growth on track, we must work to provide vital resources to businesses that need them the most and ensure those just starting out have the tools to survive and thrive. In building on the reauthorization of the Jobs Act and the Growing Alabama Act, we should look to expand opportunities for all entrepreneurs and small businesses to work with state and local governments. That means updating the procurement code to direct an equitable proportion of contracts to small and historically disadvantaged businesses.

In addition, we will prioritize enhancing access to capital for disadvantaged startups and existing small businesses located in underserved rural and urban communities. While we have made progress in steering some American Rescue Plan (ARP) dollars to rural, agrarian and impoverished communities, much more remains to be done. Meanwhile, new partnerships, backed by financial institutions like Goldman Sachs, Wells Fargo, Regions Bank and others are committing to equity investments in minority-owned businesses in communities right here and across the south.

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Understanding ALISON:

Alabama Legislative Information System Online

By Kayla Bass • Director of External Affairs • ALM

For those of you who are new to municipal office, legislative advocacy is a primary function of your Alabama League of Municipalities. In fact, it's so important that the League staff relies heavily on our members to be an active part of the process. That being said, we make sure you have all the necessary information to be an effective advocate throughout the legislative session. You will receive weekly reports from our office during each legislative session via our legislative e-newsletter, the *State House Advocate*, a critical part of our advocacy process that reviews the actions taken by the Legislature the previous week and outlines what we expect to take place during the upcoming week. Often times we will ask you to personally advocate on behalf of your municipality during the session to enhance our lobbying efforts. The *State House Advocate* and Monday morning coffee and conversation conference calls will provide you with key information as well as important contact information and online resources to help you with those efforts. Online resources that will assist you with those efforts, such as how to schedule a meeting with your lawmaker and tips on meeting with your lawmaker, can be found on the League's website under the Legislative Advocacy section. Of particular importance is ALISON (Alabama Legislative Information System Online), the website for the Alabama Legislature.

ALISON – A Valuable Advocacy Resource

Please familiarize yourself with ALISON, the Alabama Legislature's website and legislative tracking system: www.legislature.state.al.us. Built in-house by the Legislature's tech staff, not only is ALISON the resource we will direct you to most often for information the League is tracking, you may also find that you want to independently research a legislative action, read a bill or know how your local representatives voted on certain legislative actions. ALISON provides a wealth of information, including an overview of the legislative process, House and Senate Rules, contact information for the House and Senate, session information (House and Senate Special Order Calendars, prefiled bills, bills, resolutions, confirmation, committees, etc.), meetings and announcements as well as links to other resources.

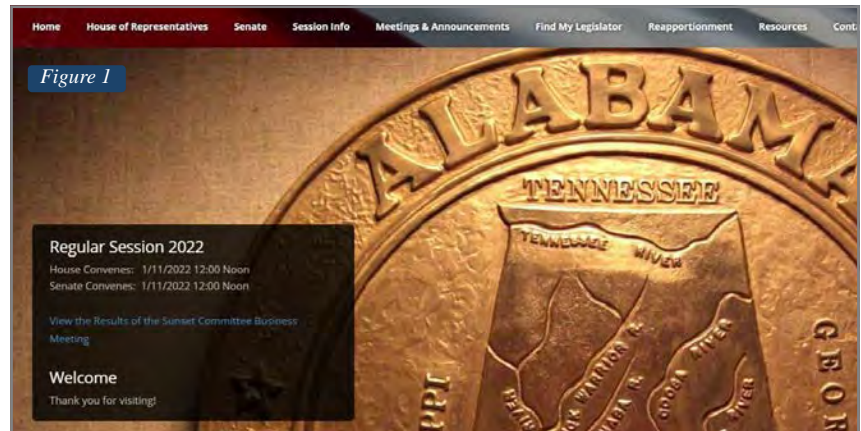


Figure 1

ALISON's web address, www.legislature.state.al.us, will take you to their opening page. There you will see a banner across the top with the following tabs: Home, House of Representatives, Senate, Session Info, Meetings & Announcements, Find My Legislator, Resources and Contact Us (see Figure 1).

Who are my legislators and what committees do they serve on?

To quickly reach your legislators, click on the "House of Representatives" or "Senate" tab at the top of the opening page. Scroll down the page and you will find an assortment of buttons (see Figure 2) that will link you to information about your legislators. The "Members" and "Standing Committees" buttons are the most important for this purpose as they will allow you to quickly see who serves on which committee and then circle back to their contact information. These links will be particularly important when you are asked by the League to reach out to a committee to advocate for or against a bill being debated by that committee.



Figure 2

Session Info

Another important resource via ALISON, is the “Session Info” tab on the homepage, which will link you to a variety of options regarding the legislative session. Click on “Regular Session 2022” located in the black box along the top left side of the page (see Figure 3).

This will take you to a page allowing you to quickly access several important categories via the “Quick Links” box along the right-hand side of the page. For instance, you can “Search Text of a Bill,” (see Figure 4) view the Special Order Calendars, find the “Status of an Instrument (bill),” visit the “Code of Alabama” or view “Prefiled Bills.” Several House and Senate bills have already been pre-filed for consideration.

Finding the Status of a Bill (Instrument)

Under the Quick Links from the page described above, select “Find Status of an Instrument” (“instrument” is the same as “bill”) and then click on the SB (Senate Bill) or HB (House Bill) button and enter the bill number you’re seeking in the “Instrument Number” box near the top. This will link you to the bill and provide you the names of sponsors and committee assignment (see Figure 5).

Legislative Day

The “Legislative Day” tab along the top of the ALISON website will provide you with House and Senate First Readings, Special Order Calendars (as they are adopted), Current Matter before the bodies and Legislative Audio/Video (see Figure 6).

Conclusion

While ALISON can be somewhat counter intuitive, it is the best resource for staying current during the legislative session. The League will absolutely need your participation throughout the 2022 Regular Session to promote our legislative priorities and to stop any bills that threaten local government. As mentioned above, your weekly *State House Advocate* and Monday coffee and conversation conference calls will review the session week by week and will ask for specific engagement. A link to ALISON is always prominently displayed at the end of the e-newsletter – and you will most likely find yourself visiting ALISON often during the legislative session so please take some time to become comfortable navigating the site. As always, we appreciate your engagement and thank you for your support! ■

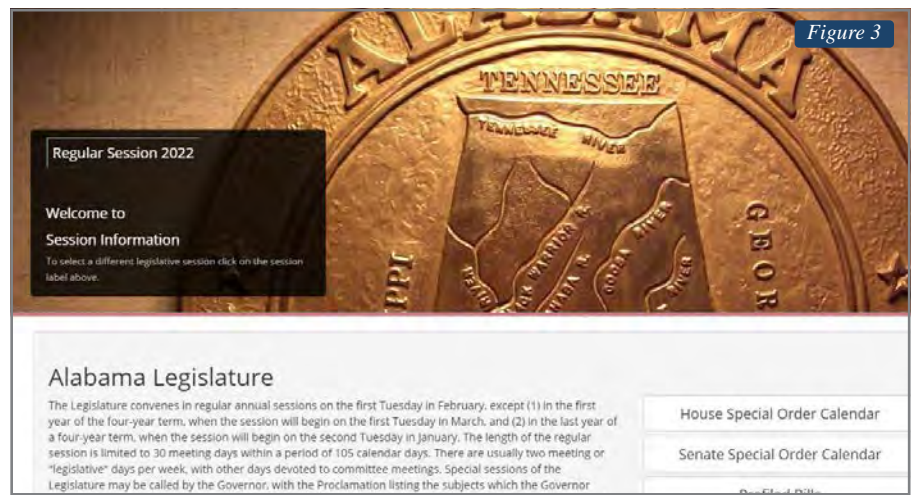


Figure 3



Figure 4

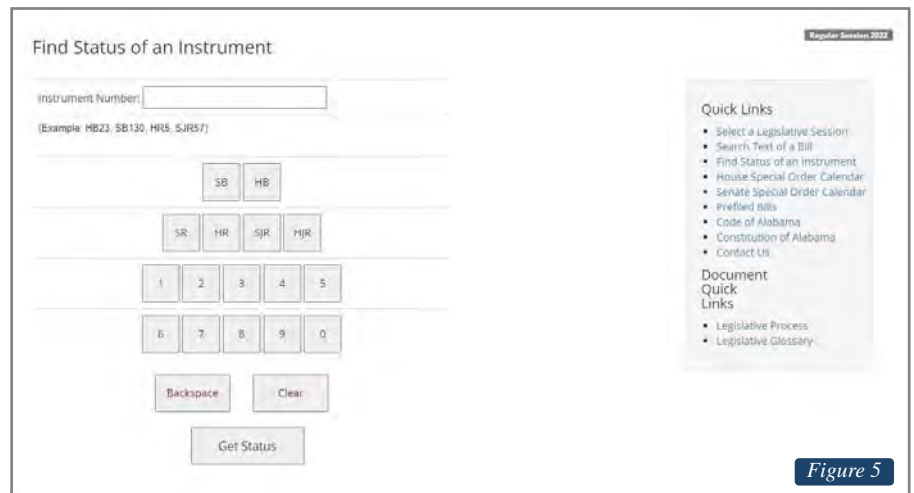


Figure 5

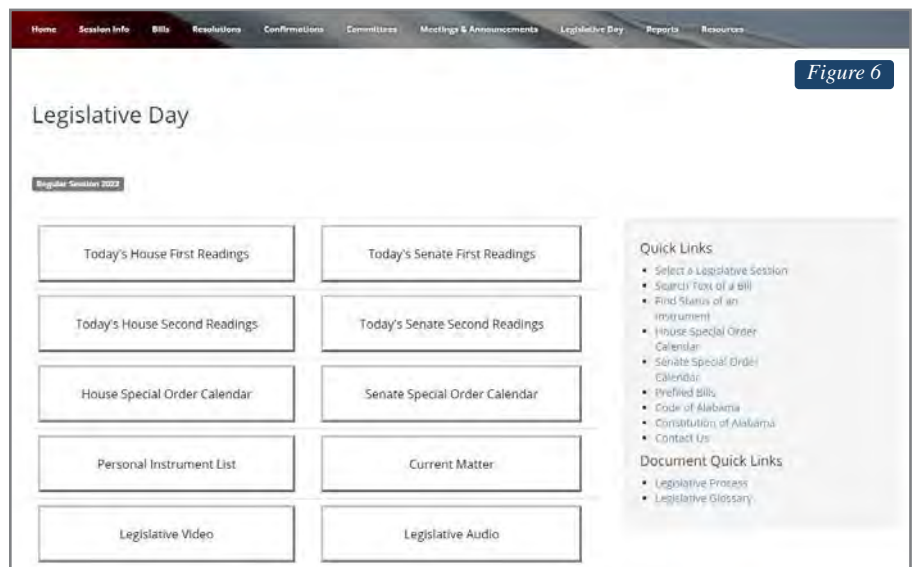


Figure 6

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. A rules change approved by the Senate this year provides that the members of Senate standing committees are appointed by the Senate President Pro Tem.

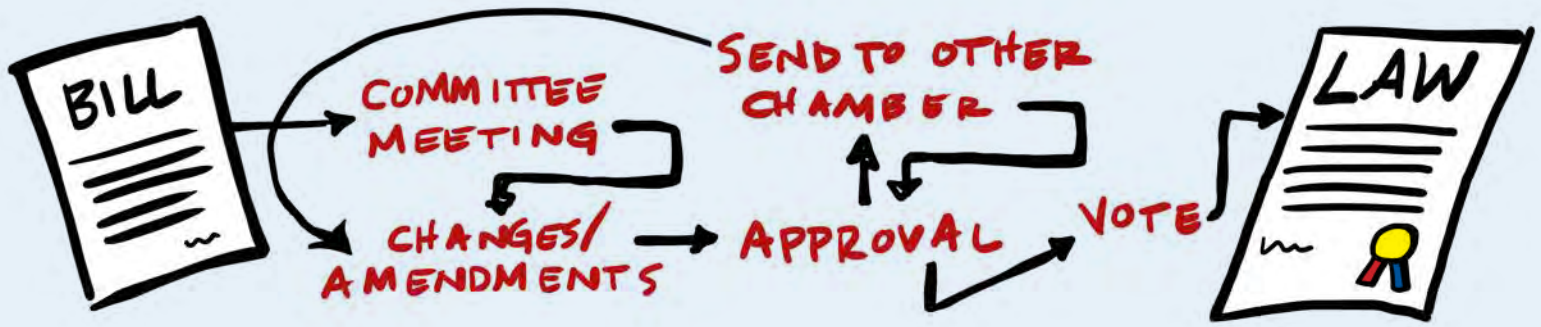
Length of Sessions

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 such legislation which has application to only one municipality must be advertised prior to introduction according to the provisions of Section 106 of the Alabama Constitution.

Section 106, as amended by Amendment 341, of the Alabama Constitution of 1901 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 either the Legislative Reference Service (LRS) or the Legislative Fiscal Office (LFO) as directed by a member of the Legislature.

The LRS is the principal bill drafting and legal research office serving the Legislature of the State of Alabama. LRS is a great source of information to the citizens of Alabama on all things relating to legislation. In addition to bill drafting, the duties of the LRS office include:

- Responding to questions concerning the organization and administration of state government or the operation of constitutional or statutory law.
- Rendering assistance in the drafting of bills and amendments to bills at the direction of a member of the Legislature.
- Making studies and reports on problems of state and local government in Alabama, either upon request or on one's own initiative.
- Conducting a continuous analysis of the scope, effect, and methods of federal, state, and local government operations in Alabama and making recommendations to the Legislative Council as appropriate.
- Preparing, when directed by the Legislature, a compilation or code of the statutes of Alabama.
- Acting as Code Commissioner in determining the content of the Code of Alabama 1975 and any supplements thereto and preparing an annual codification bill to adopt changes to the code enacted at prior sessions of the Legislature.
- Entering into a printing contract on behalf of the State of Alabama, when approved and directed by the Legislative Council, to publish the official code of the statutes of Alabama.
- Publishing the Alabama Administrative Monthly and the Alabama Administrative Code.

The LFO was established for the purpose of providing independent, accurate and objective fiscal information to members of the Alabama Legislature. They also provide bill and amendment drafting services much like the LRS. Additional duties of the LFO include:

- serving as primary staff for the House Ways and Means Committees and Senate Finance and Taxation Committees;
- fiscal analysis of legislative proposals and preparation of fiscal notes on bills which are introduced;

- analysis for the legislature of executive budget, tax and revenue proposals;
- drafting of legislative budget, tax and revenue proposals and related legislation;
- tracking of budget, tax and revenue legislation;
- analysis of agency budgets and budget requests;
- monitoring of state tax and other receipts;
- revenue estimating;
- certification (in conjunction with a separate certification by the Director of Finance) by the Legislative Fiscal Officer of projected growth in the Education Trust Fund by the third legislative day of each regular session (as required by Act 2000-732- the “National Average for Teachers’ Salaries” Act);
- special evaluations of programs or agencies as designated by the Joint Fiscal Committee;
- general research upon request of legislative committees or individual legislators; and
- publication and distribution of materials to communicate fiscal information to legislators and the public.

Once bills are prepared by either LRS or LFO, they are often introduced in both houses of the legislature on or about the same date. This practice is not prohibited except the Alabama Constitution, in Section 70, requires that all bills to raise 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 such committee in session, and returned therefrom.

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 orders. 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.

After a bill has been voted on, any member who voted with the prevailing side may move to reconsider the question, but the time within which bills may be reconsidered is limited in both houses. 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, he or she may sign it and thus complete the enactment of a bill into law. However, if the Governor objects to the bill, he or she 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 his or her 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 him or her, 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 him or her 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 Reference Service or the Legislative Fiscal Office. For questions relating to legislation affecting municipalities, please contact ALM's Governmental Affairs Department or the Legal Department. ■

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OPELIKA

Blazing a Trail for Workforce Development

Leigh G. Krehling • Community Relations Officer • City of Opelika

A robust workforce is an essential component of any successful city. With a population of just over 30,000, Opelika is the county seat of Lee County located along I-85 in east-central Alabama – and a community where there is no shortage of ways one can get plugged into the workforce with a good paying job in an excellent career path. Whether through partnerships with the city, Opelika Economic Development, the Opelika School System, Southern

Union State Community College (SUSCC) or current industries, employers and job seekers have the resources they need to sustain and build a solid future. Industries need skilled, motivated employees. In Opelika, we have established the **Opelika Workforce Council** which brings many workforce resources together to ensure that there is a collaborative effort in place to prepare and match people to the job most suited to them.

Veterans and Military Spouses

Our city has always been a strong supporter and proponent for transitioning service members, veterans and military spouses to the workforce. These highly skilled individuals are often overlooked in the workforce recruitment process. Both men and women who bring much needed value to our companies have a commitment to quality, and already possess some of the high-demand technical skills needed in today's marketplace. Through the tireless efforts of Lori Huguley, Opelika Economic Development Director, and John Sweatman, Opelika Economic Development Project Manager, the city recently signed an agreement with Fort Benning and the Soldiers for Life Center to create internships through the **Opelika Career Skills Program (CSP)**. This program is designed to partner transitioning service members, veterans and military spouses with local companies. In addition, the program will allow the city to participate on base recruiting these prospects through digital job postings and weekly hiring events.

Sweatman and the Economic Development team also work with other veteran organizations like **Heroes Make America** and **Still Serving Veterans** to provide opportunities for new careers here in Opelika and to meet the growing workforce needs of our companies. As an added emphasis to how much value is placed on the importance of providing great careers for our military families, the City of Opelika and the Opelika Chamber of Commerce have put together an incentive program, **Vets Choose Opelika**, that provides financial assistance and other benefits for service members locating to Opelika to start a new career and as they purchase a home.

A Network of Partners Offering Resources and Support

The **Opelika Workforce Council**, led by the Opelika Economic Development team, also includes representatives from multiple business sectors and other organizations focused on building a healthy workforce and creating opportunities for Opelika citizens. The **Goodwill Career Center** provides training resources and partners with job fairs. **Auburn University's Career Advisory Board** builds connections through internships and co-op opportunities with local companies which helps keep talent local. The **Center for Integrated Manufacturing at SUSCC** provides facilities for meetings, training for needed career sectors and individualized training programs to meet specific company needs. And finally, **Central AlabamaWorks** utilizes the Annual Career Discovery Day and partners with the Opelika School System to introduce all 8th grade students to future career pathways. Bringing industry, jobseekers, students and training providers together, they look to find lasting solutions to workforce needs. This event also helps students make classroom course decisions that will affect their future career opportunities. For employers, it opens a pipeline to a future generation of leaders, proactively building a future workforce.

The **Ready to Work** program offered by SUSCC and AIDT to Opelika High School students is now in its third year. Students who may plan to enter the workforce directly after high school can take part in this program. Upon completion of the Ready To Work program, graduates



Dual enrollment students are critical to workforce development efforts.

Opelika High School (left) and Southern Union State Community College (right) have a long-standing dual enrollment partnership allowing OHS students to take manufacturing courses during the school day by simply walking across the street to the SUSCC campus.



receive two industry recognized credentials: 1. National Career Readiness Certificate (ACT) 2. Alabama Certified Worker Certificate (AIDT). The program is designed to build skills based on demands of local businesses and industries, along with technology, computer knowledge and employment availability. Local Opelika industries also play a large role in this program by inviting students to site visits, as well as participating in classroom visits.

Dual Enrollment, Work-Based Learning and Associate Degrees

Opelika High School's administration has committed to workforce development through a number of in-house efforts. The **Career and Technical Education** programs and courses give students the opportunity to practice hands-on learning in a variety of career pathways including agriculture, food, natural resources, arts, audio video technology, communication, education, business, health science, hospitality and tourism, information technology and engineering. This allows students a better understanding of careers to help them determine if they want to enter a particular field directly out of high school or continue to a two- or four-year institution.

In addition, Opelika High School and SUSCC have a long-standing partnership with **Dual Enrollment**. OHS students can begin taking manufacturing courses at Southern Union during the school day. The proximity of OHS to SUSCC is a luxury that most high schools don't have, as students are able to simply walk across the street for dual enrollment classes. As long as a student's schedule allows, they are put in Manufacturing Skills Standards Council courses which focus on safety, quality, manufacturing processes and maintenance. Students can then decide whether they want to pursue careers such as welding, plastics injection, etc. Another benefit is that all technical dual enrollment classes are funded by grants; therefore, student's tuition is typically covered.

Opelika High School also focuses on **Work-Based Learning**. Students can take the pathway from career awareness (in-class speakers) to career exploration (job shadowing) to cooperative education. In the co-op program, students who work 140 hours a semester receive school credit. Through work-based learning, students learn employability skills, technical skills, job skills, financial literacy and, eventually, some are offered full-time employment.

Local industries also partner with Southern Union with the **F.A.M.E.** (Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education) Technician Program. This two-year technical associate degree combines cutting-edge curriculum that supports advanced manufacturing technology, paid working experience, along with learning highly sought after business principles and best practices of world class manufacturers. Local industries like Golden State Foods, Pharmavite and others allow students to earn a wage while gaining work experience, with the potential for sponsor companies to hire graduates full time after completion of the program.

In our ever-changing world, there continues to be a great need for a strong, skilled workforce. In Opelika, every effort is being made to reach people where they are and get them trained and ready to go to work. From middle school to retired veterans, the leaders of this great city stay focused on their futures. We are fortunate to have the support from the Governor, to the Mayor, to the School Superintendent. Opelika is an ideal place to live and play. But most importantly, it's an excellent place to work. ■



Leigh G. Krehling became the Community Relations Officer for the City of Opelika in 2016 after working in the advertising industry for nearly 20 years. She is a graduate of Auburn University ('95) with a degree in Corporate Journalism and Public Relations. She is active in the community, serving as a board member for the Opelika ArtHaus and the United Way of Lee County, as well as Chair of the Lee County Public Information Officer Task Force. She is also a member of the Public Relations Council of Alabama Chapter in East Alabama, Leadership Lee County, the Opelika Citizens Police Academy and volunteers her time with the Opelika Chamber of Commerce and the Opelika City Schools.

Tuskegee: Maximizing Your Community Resources

Lawrence “Tony” Haygood, Jr. • Mayor • City of Tuskegee

In most of our cities and towns throughout Alabama, we have various resources available that support our city’s sustainability, growth and development. Many cities have and utilize some of the same resources while some communities are fortunate enough to have special and sometimes unique resources. More often than not, many of our communities have great resources that go unutilized or underutilized because we are unaware of their value or potential.

Tuskegee: A Personal Case Study

I hail from Tuskegee, the county seat of Macon County, located 40 miles east of Montgomery in Central Alabama. Founded in 1833, the city has a noteworthy and multilayered history. Because the area still retained members of the Creek Nation, the community’s name came from Creek leader Taskigi. Following the forceable removal of the Creek Indians, Tuskegee officially incorporated a decade later in 1843 – a town fashioned around a central square with the courthouse located across the street. In 1881, Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute – now Tuskegee University – was founded by Dr. Booker T. Washington, an educator and reformer who was born into slavery and rose above his early circumstances to become an extremely influential spokesperson for Black Americans during the turn of the 20th century. He was also responsible for hiring agriculture scientist and inventor Dr. George Washington Carver to teach agriculture at Tuskegee where he developed hundreds of products using peanuts, sweet potatoes and soybeans and made tremendous advances in farming technology.

During World War II, the Tuskegee Airfield was the training center for the Tuskegee Airmen, more than 1,000 Black pilots and the first African American pilots in U.S. military service. Tuskegee is also the backdrop for the infamous U. S. Government Syphilis Study – the nation’s longest running health experiment which ran from the early 1930s until the early 1970s and studied the effects of untreated, late-stage syphilis in African American men without the consent of the participants.

Like many of our communities in Alabama, Tuskegee remains a small, rural city. With a population of just over 8,000, we have some resources common to other municipalities and some slightly unique resources available in our community and surrounding area. Like most smaller cities and towns in Alabama, Tuskegee is learning to maximize those resources in order to plan for a successful future.

My background is in business and community/economic development, and I have worked for the Tuskegee-Macon County Community Development Corporation for a number of years. This led me to understand that many community projects must go through local, county or state government – or some government structure – in order to move forward. Therefore, in 2012, I decided to run for city council because I realized that various political facets tend to hold up projects or progress and I felt that if I got involved with municipal government, it would allow Tuskegee to accomplish more through the Community Development Corporation. I won my 2012 election and was first elected mayor in 2016. I remain involved with the Community Development Corporation because the mayor’s position is part-time; therefore, I have a unique perspective on how to maximize community resources.

Taking Inventory – Tangible and Intangible

We first had to inventory our community assets and assess their value and usefulness. Tuskegee is very fortunate in that, while we are a small rural city, we found that we have several tangible assets and some intangible assets at our disposal. Tangible assets are those that we see and interact with in some physical manner fairly regularly. Intangible assets are those that are most easily overlooked because they may not be a physical resource that we can see, touch or feel.

For instance, tourism is a major resource in our community. Two tangible assets supporting our tourism are Tuskegee University,

a world-renowned university and a National Historic Site as recognized by the National Park Service of the U. S. Department of Interior, and The Tuskegee Airmen Museum at Moton Field, “Home of the Redtails” – also a National Historic Site in our community.

An intangible asset supporting tourism in our community is our rich history bolstered by the achievements of numerous outstanding and internationally acclaimed prominent individuals including Dr. Booker T. Washington, Dr. George Washington Carver, The Tuskegee Airmen, singer and songwriter Lionel Richie, radio host Tom Joyner, civil rights attorney Fred D. Gray, Seminole Chief Osceola, writer Richard Wright and composer/choir director Dr. William L. Dawson, just to name a few. Their contributions and accomplishments are evidenced in the fields of education, science, military training, law, Civil Rights, music and literary writings.

A given tangible community resource is our location in Central Alabama along I-85 between Montgomery and Auburn and in reasonable proximity to the Atlanta airport. At our Interstate-85 Exit #38, we have been designated a CSX Railway Site. This designation is supported by our proximity to State Highway 81; a general aviation airport with a 5,000+ foot runway; and a natural flowing creek which is a major water source. In order to increase traffic and economic development activity in the area around our airport, we built a new terminal building in 2020 that will be a major plus for pilots of smaller planes and jets. However, this important tangible asset has been significantly boosted by a critical intangible – relationships.

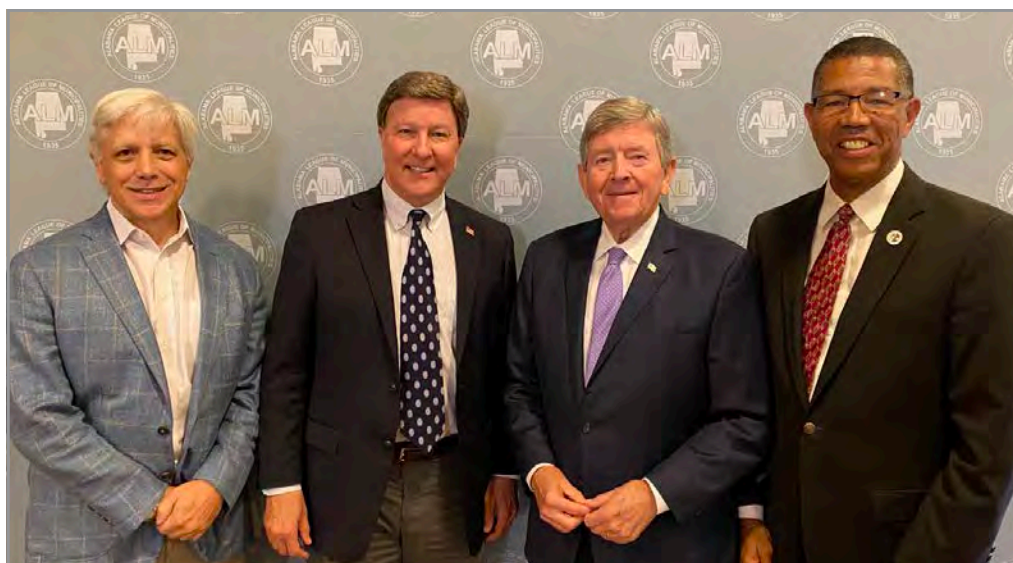
The partnerships and collaborative bridges we build and establish allow us to accomplish much more than we could otherwise accomplish alone. Tuskegee is constantly seeking to build and expand critical relationships and has reached out to the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA), South Central Alabama Development Commission (SCADC), Main Street Alabama and the local Macon County Government for support. We have learned that there is tremendous opportunity to maximize community resources when we reach across cultural, racial and political party lines (Democrat, Republican, Independent) and utilize one of our greatest intangible assets – good, honest, open communication with one another.

Additionally, I make a point to keep in contact and to meet with the mayors from communities near mine – Mayor Gary Fuller in Opelika, Mayor Ron Anders in Auburn, Mayor John Hammock in Tallahassee and Mayor Steven Reed in Montgomery. These relationships are important because things don’t happen in isolation. Particularly for small communities, we’re the most impacted by the communities around us. Several years ago, Tuskegee was a semifinalist in the site selection for the US Air Force T100 jet training project because, while Auburn’s airport wasn’t large enough, Tuskegee had an airfield that would work and was still in the same proximity. Thanks to my relationships with other officials, and because of my community development training, Tuskegee was better prepared to help find an option that would benefit the region. Ultimately, we didn’t win the project; however, we wouldn’t have even been considered had

the relationships not been in place.

Another excellent regional example is that Mayor Fuller has significant retail opportunities in Opelika – something Tuskegee does not have. However, as Opelika continues to grow, Tuskegee has the opportunity to take advantage of their growth. Additionally, Tuskegee’s employment is directly affected by what companies are based in Opelika, particularly the automotive tier one suppliers. The residents of my community have access to and opportunity for good jobs based on the success of the region.

If I didn’t have collaborative relationships with the mayors in my region, it would be more



Auburn Mayor Ron Anders, Congressman Mike Rogers, Opelika Mayor Gary Fuller and Tuskegee Mayor Tony Haygood meet regularly to discuss local and regional issues.

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ANDALUSIA:

Partnerships and Planning Are Blueprint for Success

MICHELE GERLACH • COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR • CITY OF ANDALUSIA

On a recent afternoon, Andalusia Mayor Earl Johnson stood in the center of the historic downtown Prestwood Building and reminisced.

“My office was right here,” he said, indicating space on the ground floor of the majestic building on Andalusia’s Court Square.

He was referring to his days as a brand-spanking-new attorney who had turned down an opportunity to become a JAG officer in the U.S. Navy, choosing instead to practice law in his hometown. The county seat of Covington County in south central Alabama, Andalusia was incorporated in 1884 and is located 85 miles from the Gulf of Mexico. The decision was providential not just for Johnson, but for Andalusia, as well.

After establishing a successful law firm, becoming active in civic life and rearing two daughters, he made a successful bid to become Andalusia’s mayor in 2000. There were many accomplishments during that first term, but it was the renovation of the historic East Three Notch Elementary School as City Hall that became a blueprint for future accomplishments.

“The building sits on a prominent space on our main street,” the mayor explained. “We had built a modern new elementary school, and this building was empty. Our community loves its traditions, and the sentiment was that the school should be preserved.”

The renovation produced a showpiece for the downtown area, as well as a modern and efficient city hall. In the years since then, Johnson has overseen what he likes to call a Renaissance in Andalusia – a time in which literally hundreds of millions of dollars in private, corporate and government funding have been invested in the city’s infrastructure and businesses. Much of the work was accomplished with public-private partnerships, enabled by Amendment 725 of the Constitution of Alabama, which authorizes the municipality to participate financially in economic development projects.

The City’s next two projects were with non-profits, which collectively put almost \$2 million into the projects. Working with the Andalusia Ballet, the City renovated another historic but abandoned school building to develop the Church Street Cultural Arts Centre. It partnered with the Andalusia Area Chamber of Commerce to renovate the former corporate headquarters of Alatex, once a major textile business, as an office and welcome center.

Game Changer

The next project for this community of nearly 9,000 residents was a game changer. Capitalizing on frequent calls from the public for a “nice restaurant,” and armed with research data collected by Retail Strategies showing the community would indeed support them, the City partnered with a growing restaurant company to bring Big Mike’s Steakhouse to Andalusia. The partnership agreement called for the City to renovate a former textile facility it owned in the downtown area. In turn, Big Mike’s signed a long-term lease for the facility and pays the city a portion of its profits.

“We had done our research. It was a no brainer,” Johnson said of the case presented to convince the council. “We owned the building, and nobody else was asking us to do anything with it. With a little bit of investment, we could bring an attractive business in, and, in turn, make money for the city with the tax return on that investment.”

And that investment has paid off.

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The City of Andalusia renovated the Three Notch Elementary School to become City Hall during Mayor Johnson’s first term. The project became a blueprint for many projects that have followed.

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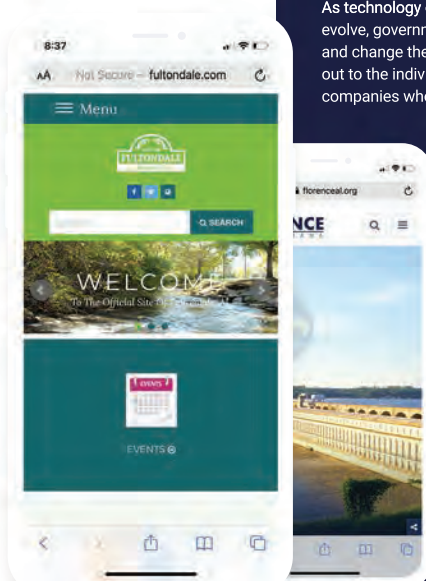
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The Government Website Experts

Your internet service provider may be blocking League emails

By Chuck Stephenson • Director of Information Technology • ALM

As many of you know, ALM changed our website and email addresses from alalm.org to almonline.org. As a result of this change, a handful of Internet Service Providers (ISPs) have been treating emails from the League's new domain as SPAM and blocking them. Our IT Team has worked with Microsoft and determined that this is occurring because the individual ISPs, out of an abundance of caution, are blocking League emails. Regrettably, this is not something the League can fix for you. There are numerous reasons the ISPs are doing this, and most of them are done because of algorithms that neither you nor the League have any control over. Keep in mind, they do this to protect you and your data. Unfortunately, sometimes their efforts filter out legitimate emails – as we are finding is the case with League emails by several service providers. Fortunately, there is something *you* can do to ensure you receive League emails.

Whitelist the League's Domain with Your Service Provider

You will need to contact your service provider directly. Be aware, however, that if you ask your ISP to fix this issue for you, their response will likely be: "We don't actively block any emails." (Which means you probably won't receive much help resolving the issue.) Therefore, you will need to be more specific with your request. Ask them to help you log into the portal website and "whitelist" the League's domain, **almonline.org**, which should resolve your issue. Please note that the portal website is the site where you most likely pay your bill and is *not* Outlook or the app on your phone where you receive your email. ■



HELENA: Sensory Inclusion Training Imperative for Serving the Public

Brian Puckett • Mayor • City of Helena

As elected officials for our municipalities, it is our top priority to protect our citizens and visitors in a wide array of venues and situations. Much like successful businesses, municipal leaders must provide our teams with the best tools and resources for them to be able to do their job in the best way possible – and ensure they are able to best serve *all* populations, including those with disabilities.

The City of Helena believes that all individuals, regardless of disabilities, deserve to be accepted and included. In March, the City partnered with KultureCity to provide Sensory Inclusion training and tools for all our first responders. As the program was being launched within these teams, we began to work with KultureCity to develop training geared towards all employees, including those outside of first responders, with the thought that every city team member who comes in contact with the public would greatly benefit from the training – so no matter if an incident happened at the ball

field, library or in one of our parks, our team would be prepared to help. By May, *every* city employee – 120+ individuals – was fully trained on how to identify and assist someone that has autism, PTSD, Down Syndrome, anxiety and other sensory needs – making Helena the first municipality in the country to have every employee fully certified. Since that time, cities in both Michigan and Ohio have been fully certified as well.

On August 3, 2021, Governor Kay Ivey held a press conference announcing that all Alabama Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA) employees had successfully completed the KultureCity training, making ALEA the nation's first state law enforcement agency to train and become sensory-inclusive. She stressed the importance of the State being inclusive and that making mental health a priority and providing critical support to those that need it the most was a key goal of her administration.

About KultureCity (www.kulturecity.org)

KultureCity is a Birmingham-based nonprofit organization that was founded in 2014 with the focus on sensory inclusion and providing training to help create a more inclusive environment. KultureCity is recognized throughout the nation for utilizing its resources to revolutionize and effect change in the community for individuals with sensory needs, such as Autism or PTSD, or those with invisible disabilities. The program's training focuses on instilling understanding, acceptance and empathy in first responders toward those who have sensory needs. The goal of this training is to enhance future interactions between law enforcement and the community to create the best outcomes. Through the specialized training, KultureCity endeavors to bring back individuals who have withdrawn from their communities. Humans are social beings. Many of these individuals withdraw, not by choice, but from fear of if the community will accept or include them. KultureCity's training focuses on four factors when interacting with people who have sensory needs or invisible disabilities:

- The importance of empathy towards someone with an invisible disability or a sensory need and how common these needs are in society today.
- What to do when engaging with someone who has an invisible disability or a sensory need, and how to recognize that they might have a need.
- Strategies that can be used to help individuals with sensory needs or invisible disabilities to adapt to a situation that may be overwhelming.
- How best to close that interaction and help resolve the situation in a positive way.

Helena's Experience

Originally incorporated in 1877 and then reincorporated in 1917, Helena is located in north Shelby County and is considered part of the Birmingham-Hoover Metropolitan Area. We are a growing community with nearly 21,000 residents and, from our experience, the KultureCity process and what a municipality receives from this partnership is first class. When a city or town signs up with KultureCity, it receives a 30-minute online training course with a 10-question assessment. The training course link can be delivered as an individual or a group version. When the training is completed, the municipality then receives five sensory bags, a lap pad and signage notifying the public about the areas within the community that are prepared to help with sensory issues if they arise. The sensory bags include tools to aid sensory-challenged people, such as noise-canceling headphones, fidget tools like spinners and nonverbal communication cards. As a nonprofit, KultureCity charges \$500 for the training and materials, making this worthwhile resource an affordable option for every municipality in Alabama.

Using the KultureCity training as a companion to standard first responder training, our municipalities have the opportunity to make the ultimate difference within our communities. Considering the many obstacles and challenges facing municipal leaders, this partnership and training is not only a great investment, but a positive public relations resource that can help instill community confidence and pride. KultureCity will work hand in hand with you to provide a public relations template to help inform your community of this amazing program.

Investigate Further

I encourage you to visit www.kulturecity.org to learn more about the specialized training and the organization's mission. If you have questions about signing your team up for this great, inexpensive program, or if you want to learn more about the success stories from Helena, please feel free to reach out to me at bpuckett@cityofhelena.org. This is a win-win for everyone! ■



Governor Kay Ivey announced that all Alabama Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA) employees have successfully completed the KultureCity training, making ALEA the nation's first state law enforcement agency to train and become sensory-inclusive. Here troopers are pictured with a KultureCity Sensory Bag that includes aids for sensory-challenged people.



Brian Puckett was elected as Mayor of Helena in 2020. Prior to taking office as Mayor, he served on City Council, Place 2. Brian is a Certified Alabama Planning and Zoning Official and is on the Board of Directors for the Alabama League of Municipalities, Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham and the Shelby County Chamber of Commerce. He also serves on the Alabama League of Municipalities Committee on Transportation, Infrastructure and Communication. Brian holds a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration and a Master's Degree in Business Administration that focused on Organization Leadership and Theories. Before taking office as Mayor, Brian was employed by one of the nation's top banks where he gained valuable experience in leading and managing a multimillion-dollar program – knowledge he is able to leverage while serving Helena. Through his work experience he holds numerous professional certifications.

“Take it to the People”

Monroeville Initiates Program to Vaccinate Homebound

Mary Jackson • Education Coordinator • Alabama League of Municipalities

Monroeville, Alabama, is nestled in the southwest part of the state between Mobile and the edge of Alabama’s Black Belt region. Incorporated in 1899, the city serves as the county seat for Monroe County and is home to the annual Monroeville Literary Festival, formally known as the Alabama Writer’s Symposium, a two-day event that brings together many of Alabama’s most distinguished writers and scholars for a variety of community events, including readings, lectures and discussions. While Monroeville is known for its literary greats such as Harper Lee and Truman Capote, Monroeville’s charm and ability to connect with its citizens is what makes this community a return destination for visitors and a desirable place to live year-round. Monroeville’s current population hovers around 6,000 but, while considered small, it’s mighty with innovative ideas.

Most recently, in late April, as I was completing my tenure as Monroeville City Clerk/Treasurer before moving to my new position with the League of Municipalities, I pitched a unique proposal to Mayor Charles Andrews, the city’s first African American mayor, to use the Monroeville Senior Center’s Meals on Wheels program staff, along with a nurse from the Monroe County Hospital (MCH), to take COVID vaccinations to the area’s homebound senior citizens.

Signing on with my out-of-the-box idea, Mayor Andrews hit the ground running – coordinating with Monroe County Hospital’s Communications Director Patti Welch; the Infectious Disease Director Jessica Goodson, MSN, RN; and the Monroeville Senior Nutrition Center to ensure everyone was able to successfully make door-to-door visits in late May and early June. Twenty-eight days later, those same homebound residents received their second COVID vaccination shot.

Welch, who dispatched the call from Mayor Andrews to the appropriate staff at the hospital to bring this program to fruition, said the idea “helped us connect with the residents that don’t have Hospice or home healthcare, so we were able to vaccinate the ones that fell between the cracks.”

Monroeville’s Senior Center is located in the Anne Farish Community Shelter and partners with the Alabama Tombigbee Regional Commission-Area Agency on Aging to offer a wide array of services to the elderly population. Becky Greene,



Nutrition Center Manager, and Doris Loyd, Nutrition Center Driver, are the primary staff members. Sandra Atkins is the Special Programs Coordinator and Department Head for the Nutrition Center with the City of Monroeville.

Greene said they were successful in vaccinating all but one of their seniors. She explained that as Loyd delivered daily meals to Monroeville's homebound, she would ask them if they would be interested in receiving their COVID-19 vaccine. She would then give the list of interested seniors to Monroe County Hospital's Infectious Disease Coordinator Jessica Goodson who would dispatch appropriate staff to the homebound seniors to administer the vaccine.

"The good thing about living in a small town is everyone knows everyone, so it was easy to find and get the vaccine to our homebound people quickly," Greene said.

Since Monroe County is considered one of Alabama's major COVID hot spots, Mayor Andrews said this coalition is taking additional approaches to vaccinate more citizens. MCH is offering extra drive-through vaccination clinics at the local area churches as well as an additional Saturday drive-through clinic at the local high school. He said they have also reached out to a historically low-income community just outside the Monroeville corporate limits to take the vaccine to those residents instead of waiting for the people to come to them.

By "taking it to the people," Monroeville's leadership and the Senior Center adapted and evolved their methods to encourage and provide community vaccinations. The partnership between the Senior Center and Monroe County Hospital not only helped area homebound senior citizens receive meals, they also benefited from a critical medical intervention to slow the spread and curb the devastation of the deadly COVID virus. ■



Mary joined the League staff in July as Education Coordinator. Prior to joining the League's team, she served as the City Clerk for Monroeville for six years where she received her Master Municipal Clerk (MMC) designation in November 2020 and chaired the Promotions Committee for Monroeville Main Street for four years. In addition, she served on the Main Street Alabama Board as the City Clerk representative and as Monroeville Rotary President from 2018-2020. A Denver, Colorado native, Mary graduated from the University of Colorado - Denver in 2004 with a BA in Communications and a minor in Theatre.



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Montevallo: Keys to Unlocking Your Community's Full Potential

Hollie C. Cost, Ph.D. Partner with Keys to the City and Assistant Vice President of University Outreach and Public Service at Auburn University

The past 18 months have presented challenges too abundant to fully express. Communities, families and individuals experienced devastating financial losses. The public remains severely divided with respect to their response to the pandemic. Lives have been lost and many businesses have been forced to shut their doors. Despite this highly complex state, there are many communities, families, businesses and individuals who have thrived in ways that are directly attributable to the pandemic. Some individuals have committed themselves to a healthier lifestyle, learned new skills, hiked for miles and miles or mastered the art of baking bread. Grocery stores experienced an unprecedented uptick in sales and the toilet paper industry exploded. And then, there are those segments of the population in corners of the world that seem relatively unimpacted by the health crisis – people who continue putting one foot in front of the other, rural communities that remained stable and businesses that quietly maintained the status quo.

Interestingly, cited throughout references to the pandemic, there is an entire nomenclature assigned to each of these states: depressing, languishing and flourishing. At the most recent Alabama League of Municipalities Annual Convention in May, I was charged with sharing keys to unlocking a community's full potential with those in attendance. In doing so, I equated these named pandemic states to the way our Alabama cities and towns are progressing over time. Removing all references to the pandemic, I challenged community leaders to look inward and determine whether their communities are depressing (going backward or crumbling), languishing (maintaining the status quo) or truly flourishing (improving the quality of life for those who work, play, pray or stay there).

Montevallo: A Personal Case Study

Located in Shelby County, Montevallo is a college community with a population just over 7,000 and home to the University of Montevallo, a public liberal arts university with approximately 3,000 students. As a civic leader from 2004-2020, first as a councilmember then as the mayor, I was part of a team wholeheartedly committed to seeing that Montevallo was not faltering, did not just maintain the status quo, but truly, deeply flourished for all who graced the 12.59 square miles of our fair city. Earlier in my civic tenure, Montevallo was truly depressing. There were moments of languishing. But over the past eight years, I can confidently state that our community most definitely flourished with respect to both our physical and our civic infrastructure.

With respect to our physical infrastructure, we completely

renovated our Main Street, built a new city hall, paved every street in need, installed free downtown WiFi, purchased three buildings, developed and upgraded ball fields, built two pocket parks and established a 167-acre park with over 10 miles of trails. Civically, we now boast diverse leadership, developed five new signature events, forged countless partnerships and developed a framework for community forums to discuss difficult problems. This progress was not without its struggles. The team we assembled hit many roadblocks along the way. However, with each of these roadblocks came incredible opportunities to learn more, forge deeper partnerships and more fully engage with our very diverse and incredibly talented and passionate community members. Based on this progress, out of a deep love for Alabama, and having a radically optimistic outlook for the future of our state, it is both a calling and a pleasure to share one path to take your community from depressing to flourishing.



Montevallo 2018 Christmas decorations. Photo by Fotowerks.



Montevallo community meeting June 2020. Photo supplied by Hollie Cost.

Taking Inventory

Quite simply, it all starts with love. Don't get nauseated or turn the page just yet. Hear me out. Without exception, every time I interact with municipal groups, at least one person, and typically several, profess a deep love for their community. So why not start here? In Montevallo, we started with what we truly loved about our community. We identified the people, the green spaces, our creek, our scenic corridor and most definitely our Main Street. By identifying features of your community that you truly love, you can then develop the means of preserving, protecting, enhancing and even capitalizing on them to bring economic vitality to your city. In our case, we imposed a scenic corridor overlay to ensure that the vista as you enter Montevallo remains protected. We gathered focus groups to chart the course for the 167-acre land donation we received. And, for three different administrations, we passed the baton to plan, fund and revitalize our Main Street District. So, this first step and the most important key truly is love.

Now, take a step back, what is it about your community that makes you cringe or embarrasses you when you have visitors? For me, it was the unsightly natural gas substation you saw right as you approached our quaint downtown. It was also the dramatic litter problem we were facing. And then there was the mildewed side of the building facing McDonalds that almost sent our university presidential candidate packing. We had uneven sidewalks, crumbling facades and empty storefronts. Our most glaring civic issue was the huge divide between our university and the city, stemming from fear that the college was trying to take over the town. The point is every community has its problems and these problems never entirely go away. You see, transformation requires vigilance. Constant maintenance and adaptation are critical. And we need to remember no one wants to work, play, pray or stay in a depressing community. No one visits. And our youth see it as a badge of honor to leave after graduation. So, as we reflect on these issues that make us cringe, it is important to acknowledge them and chart a course for overcoming them, one issue at a time. Do any of these challenges resonate with you, or do you have others to acknowledge and address?

Planning Moves a Community Forward

After identifying community assets, what you love about your community and what makes you cringe, the real fun begins! It's time to take the first critical step toward change, which is creating a plan that those in your community can embrace and execute. But plans can not be executed without a few key elements: effective leadership, community buy-in, commitment, investment, constant monitoring and assessment and openness to partnerships.

While there are various types of planning, such as comprehensive planning and master planning, *strategic planning* allows for diverse community engagement, resulting in the establishment of a mission, vision, values and clearly defined goals and action items for your community as a whole. In Montevallo we were fortunate to engage with a variety of different dedicated organizations over the years that assisted us in developing and executing our plans. Specific groups communities may consider when preparing to develop plans include regional planning commissions, county governments and private consultants.

As we began following our yellow brick road, or implementing our plans, we discovered that we were stronger when we gathered partners along the way. Much like Dorothy needed the Scarecrow, the Tinman and even the Cowardly Lion, we flourished when we formalized a partnership with Shelby County and the University of Montevallo, our schools, the local Boys and Girls Club and our Chamber of Commerce, among others. Intentionality was one key to building and strengthening these relationships. We were thoughtful and deliberate with whom we partnered and in developing the parameters of our partnerships. We understood that open dialogue and communication was key. Additionally, we reflected and regrouped when there were problems and celebrated successes together regularly.

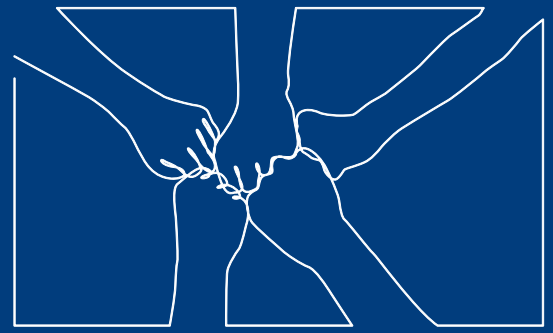
The First "Win"

When moving forward with plans, that first real "win" can set the wheels in motion in your community. This win can be something as simple as beautifying a small prominent corner of your city by planting some flowers and installing a bench;

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It's All About Relationships

Jim Byard, Jr. • Byard Associates, LLC



Al Pacino, as Michael Corleone in 1972's *The Godfather*, famously proclaimed: "It's not personal ... It's strictly business." This is a concept that the pandemic has proven totally outdated. Over these past 18 months, we've all been given a lesson in *it is personal, not business*. Like me, you can probably name neighborhood shop owners, bakers, hair stylists, baristas, makers, bartenders, waiters, clerks, dry cleaners and others you know *personally*. We interact with these people weekly, and sometimes even daily. Our interaction with these folks is not business, it is absolutely personal. Relationships matter.

Relationships matter – form them now!

As a local official, you'll be involved in many aspects of community and economic development. Having served at both the local and state level – first as a mayor and then as a member of the governor's cabinet – I have a unique perspective. And my experiences have taught me that relationships matter at *all* levels of business and government.

It is essential that you get to know the people at state and federal agencies who routinely partner with cities and towns. Successful community development and economic development projects are team efforts. You'll need these strategic partners at some point during your tenure in office. In fact, I encourage you to work on developing these relationships before you need them! Agencies like the Alabama Department of Commerce, the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA), the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM), the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development (USDA RD), the Economic Development Administration (EDA) immediately come to my mind. Utility partners are also vital to project success. Get to know Alabama Power, Spire, PowerSouth, TVA and other utility providers.

From the appointed cabinet member or agency head down to the frontline merit employee, each are there to serve. The majority of these folks love their role in public service and want to genuinely help you and the citizens you serve. Relationships matter.

If you don't already know your state representative or state senator, your congressional representative and Senators Shelby and Tuberville, it is time to reach out and introduce yourself and your community. Connections with these officials and their staffs will go a long way in helping you succeed. A letter of support, a simple phone call or a nudge from elected officials are often needed during crucial moments of an economic development or community development project. Forming relationships now will save you the embarrassment of introducing yourself by way of needing them to act immediately. It's simple: relationships matter.

Other important relationships to nurture.

It's no secret that recovery dollars are coming our way. It has been said that more federal funding will be coming to local governments than ever in our lifetimes. With this funding, comes rules on how this money must be spent. There will also be timelines on when this money must be used. Quick spending sometimes becomes wasteful spending. There are people who can help you plan how to spend your dollars. Now is the time to form relationships with folks who can help you with your strategy.

A good place to start is at your regional planning commission (alarc.org/the-councils/). Do you know your regional planning commission director? If not, you should make an appointment and meet her or him today. Alabama is served by 12 separate regional planning commissions, each providing a variety of planning services to the communities within their area. Every municipality in Alabama falls into one of these 12 footprints. Of course, there are many private firms that can provide strategic help to you. Forming relationships with these people is a must. Relationships matter, in both the public sector and private sector, too.

In addition, there are several non-profits that can be helpful with economic and community development projects. If you're unfamiliar with the folks at Main Street Alabama, DesignAlabama, Your Town Alabama or the Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE) programs, it is time for an introduction.

Main Street Alabama (www.mainstreetalabama.org) works to leverage local assets to revitalize local districts. Organization, promotion, design and economic vitality are the four points Main Street stresses as it works within a community to promote cultural and architectural heritage, local enterprise and community pride.

Your Town Alabama (www.yourtownalabama.org) is an asset-based design organization that hosts educational seminars and an annual three-day workshop. Your Town Alabama introduces technical assistance to communities across our state which include design professionals, technical experts and networking opportunities.

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difficult, if not detrimental at times, for my community. For instance, the region is currently planning for roads and infrastructure. If we go to our congress person collectively, it's more helpful because he or she understands that the project impacts multiple cities instead of just one area. And the reality is that Tuskegee is never going to be as big as Montgomery; it will never have the same draw as Auburn; and it will not have the same retail and commercial opportunities as Opelika. However, as part of a collective whole, there is tremendous opportunity. Tuskegee benefits from the services and the activities of neighboring communities that draw in visitors while maintaining our own unique history.

Along those same lines, Tuskegee cannot ignore the impact of an Auburn football game. As I mentioned above, my city is focused on intentional planning at our airport because more people are now

flying in on small jets for the games and Tuskegee not only has the runway capacity, we are within 12 to 15 minutes of the stadium depending on traffic. Therefore, we are focused on developing the services to accommodate that specific need. Likewise, when Auburn built a \$10 million, standalone emergency room on the Auburn campus, they built on the Tuskegee side of campus to service Macon County since Lee County already had its own hospital facility. Without good relationships and collaborative communication, that may not have happened. *All* communities are impacted by the things around us, and we can grow economically if we understand what's happening in our regions.

Another example: as Tuskegee has sought to boost economic development and establish retail activity in the community, we found another major intangible community resource in our Utilities Board that partnered with The Macon County Economic Development Authority and the City to establish a public-private partnership with a local developer to bring retail to our once abandoned Exit #38 on I-85.

Tuskegee is fortunate to have several tangible natural resources that we are currently working to maximize, including our beautiful City lake just over a half mile from the downtown area which provides fishing, small boating/canoeing, walking/hiking areas and picnicking on and around the lake and Tuskegee National Forest, just outside our City on highway 29N going towards Auburn that provides hiking trails, horseback riding, fishing, camping, bird watching and a shooting range among other outdoor activities. As we focus more on these tangible assets, tourism will likely increase substantially along with the visitors expected at our National Historic sites.

An additional key community resource often overlooked is human resources in the form of volunteers who reside in our communities. In Tuskegee, we have organizations with volunteers who serve as ambassadors and assist in maintaining and promoting our National Historic Sites, local History Center as well as tourism in general. The Friends of the Tuskegee Airmen, Chamber of Commerce, local arts groups, fraternities, sororities and other organizations can be relied upon to assist when we are hosting important visitors or holding major events in the City.

One final intangible that can make or break progress is *knowledge*. What is your background? How much do you know about opportunities and challenges facing your community? It is important to remember that business and politics don't necessarily work the same way; therefore, you must understand how they can work together for the good of the community.

I recommend that anyone who does not have a background in economic and community development engage in some basic training to expand your knowledge base and skillsets. The Intensive Economic Development Training Course offered annually through Auburn's Government and Economic Development Institute (GEDI) is an excellent resource. I've taken it, and – even though I've been through all kinds of specialized training because of my background – GEDI's training was extremely beneficial because it is designed to teach participants about economic development *in Alabama* – how that process works and who the key entities are that can help you develop projects in your area. In Alabama, the State has a lot of influence as to where major industries and opportunities go, and interested parties are directed towards communities that are ready for economic development. Therefore, you must present yourself as a community that has resources and one that's willing and ready, which is why it's important to educate yourself so you will understand how the process works.

The cost and time to educate yourself are absolutely worth the investment. In addition to the training, you meet people from all over the state with different backgrounds that relate to economic development who will be important in your efforts – such as utility company representatives and others. For instance, the GEDI intensive training helped me better understand what Alabama Power looks for when a project is coming. It helped me better understand what kind of relationships and knowledge I need to have regarding the infrastructure for a project.

Additionally, the new Economic Development Academy that the Alabama League of Municipalities is launching in November will also be an excellent opportunity for municipal officials to familiarize themselves with the nuances of the economic development process as well as learn how to best prepare your community to attract businesses. In fact, the League is an excellent year-round resource. Not only does our municipal organization offer multiple training opportunities throughout the year, it's a gateway to our colleagues around the state – from cities large and small – who we might not have met otherwise, and the information the staff is constantly compiling and sharing keeps us alert, aware and on the forefront of major opportunities and challenges, particularly as it pertains to legislation affecting our communities.

Unique Partnerships

I've emphasized the importance of partnerships. In that vein, I'll also encourage you to think creatively and be open to different or unique opportunities. One extremely beneficial recent partnership for Tuskegee came in the form of a Sister City program. At one point, Tuskegee's lack of diversity seemed like a challenge for the City. However, in 2017, a predominately white community (95 percent) from South Berwick, Maine, asked to set up a Sister City relationship with Tuskegee, which is 97 percent African American. The following year, nine Maine residents traveled to Tuskegee to launch the relationship and create real person-to-person connections. Then in the spring of 2018, I along with eight other Tuskegee residents, traveled north to the rugged Atlantic coast and spent four nights in the homes of strangers in South Berwick.

The lack of diversity in both communities resulted in a shared learning experience which became a resource for progress, growth, cultural understanding and new tourism opportunities in both cities. One particularly endearing outreach example took place in 2019 and involved our next generations. In an effort to engage young people, South Berwick's school district invited a Tuskegee historian and educator to spend a week in their schools – grades K through 12 – talking about our community, his own personal experience with the Civil Rights Movement and everything from the Tuskegee Airmen to the Voting Rights Act. He stayed in the school librarian's home and met with teachers, community members and city leaders. This exchange, while largely cultural, was a true touchstone for both communities. People of different races, religions, backgrounds and circumstances must be able to connect and communicate with each other in order for growth and prosperity to happen.

Final Thoughts

Many of you may be serving as elected leaders in communities where you've lived many years, if not most of your lives. Therefore, you are uniquely positioned to not only be an ambassador for your city or town, but the catalyst for progress. There is always room for improvement – and those leaders who are willing to educate themselves, build relationships, form partnerships and collaborate regionally will be the ones who spearhead the most success in their municipalities.

Tuskegee is continually assessing our community resources and learning how to get the most out of what we have and where we are. We invite you to visit us in Tuskegee. The door is open, and the WELCOME mat is out. ■



Lawrence F. "Tony" Haygood, Jr. was elected Mayor of Tuskegee in 2016 and re-elected in 2020. Mayor Haygood received his undergraduate degree at Rhodes College with a major in Political Science and a minor concentration in Economics. He received an MBA Degree from Auburn University Montgomery with additional studies in Management Science at Krannert School of Management at Purdue University and The Georgia Institute of Technology. In the summer of 2011, he completed the Intensive Economic Development Training Course at Auburn University. He serves as Economic/Business Development Specialist at the Tuskegee-Macon County Community Development Corporation (TMCDC). In addition to being a member of the Housing & Urban Development (HUD), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), and Community Development Action Coalition (CDAC) national boards, Mayor Haygood is also a current member and past president of Alpha Nu Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. Mayor Haygood currently serves as the Vice President of the Alabama League of Municipalities, is an Advanced Certified Municipal Official and is Chair of the Alabama Municipal Funding Corporation (AMFund) Board of Directors.

Relationships — continued from page 35

DesignAlabama (www.designalabama.org) is a citizen led organization that emphasizes good design and sustainability across Alabama. Their annual Mayors Design Summit allows five mayors to attend a two-day locally focused design charette with architects, land planners and designers.

Alabama Communities of Excellence (www.alabamacommunitiesofexcellence.org) is a partner for cities ranging in size from 2000 to 18,000 in population. ACE stresses community assets, planning, leadership, economic/community development and quality of life in each participating city or town.

Main Street Alabama, Your Town Alabama, DesignAlabama and ACE have separate and distinct missions; however, each plays an integral role. And each has people who are willing to meet you, discuss challenges with you and work toward solutions alongside of you. Relationships with these organizations will be beneficial to you and to the citizens you represent.

Keith Ferrazzi, author of the bestseller *Never Eat Alone, and Other Secrets to Success, One Relationship at a Time* says that “what distinguishes highly successful people from everyone else is the way they use the power of relationships – so that everyone wins.” It is incumbent on local elected officials to leverage the power of relationships so that your city or town and your constituents will benefit. I believe in the value of relationships. If you get the right souls to the table, and keep the wrong ones away, any challenge can be successfully met. ■



In 2017, Jim Byard, Jr. formed Byard Associates LLC, a strategic development firm specializing in business development as well as community and economic development. He served as Mayor of the City of Prattville from 1999 to 2011 and as Director of ADECA (Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs) from 2011 to 2017. He serves on the Board of Directors of Main Street Alabama, YourTown Alabama, DesignAlabama, Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE), the Autauga Education Foundation, The Prattville Industrial Development Board and the Prattville YMCA. He is a past president of the Alabama League of Municipalities and has served on the Boards of the National League of Cities, the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and the Delta Regional Authority (DRA). He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science with double minors in business and sociology from Troy State University Montgomery, now Troy University. He is a graduate of Leadership Alabama and the Delta Leadership Institute Executive Academy. Jim can be reached at jim@byardassociates.com.

The League Welcomes New Team Member Mary Jackson



Mary joined the League staff in July as Education Coordinator, a new position responsible for curriculum oversight of the League’s Certified Municipal Official (CMO) program and Economic Development Academy as well as any additional training and outreach programs implemented by the League. Prior to joining the League’s team, she served as the City Clerk for Monroeville for six years where she received her Master Municipal Clerk (MMC) designation in November 2020 and chaired the Promotions Committee for Monroeville Main Street for four years. In addition, she served on the Main Street Alabama Board as the City Clerk representative and participated in the League’s FAIR and Human Development standing committee meetings. A proud Rotarian since 2013, Mary served as Monroeville Rotary President from 2018-2020. While in Monroeville, she attended Annunciation Catholic Church where she served on the Parish Council; was a member of the Old Federal Road DAR Chapter; and enjoyed volunteering on various boards to help better the Monroeville community.

A Denver, Colorado native, Mary graduated from the University of Colorado - Denver in 2004 with a BA in Communications and a minor in Theatre. In 2002, she completed an internship with the Walt Disney World (WDW) Resort during which she attended a Communications and Leadership course at Disney University; performed in the ‘Tapestry of Dreams’ Parade at Epcot; worked in crowd control at Hollywood Studios; and became a WDW College Program Recruiter upon her return to Colorado. Following graduation, she worked for the University of Colorado Hospital as a Care Team Specialist and was promoted to Program Assistant in the Risk Management office to prepare medical malpractice claims for medical review. During her time at the hospital, Mary attended The Art of Leadership development program and was the recipient of the University of Colorado Hospital President’s Award in 2009 for “Working Together.” In October 2010, she moved to Alabama to be closer to her family based in Evergreen and began working for the University of Alabama’s Graduate School as a Senior Admissions Counselor and Special Projects Coordinator.

Mary and her daughter, Jacklynn Grace, now live in Pike Road where they look forward to supporting both the Pike Road and Montgomery communities. ■

Medical Cannabis and Your Municipality

On May 17, 2021, Governor Ivey signed Act 2021-450 (S.B. 46, by Sen. Melson) providing for the medical use of marijuana for patients with a qualifying medical condition and a valid medical cannabis card. For purposes of the sale and use of medical marijuana in Alabama, the Act is effective September 1, 2022. The Act adds Chapter 2A to Title 20 of the Alabama Code, Ala. Code §§ 20-2A-1 to 20-2A-68. Final placement and text of 2021 legislation is subject to editorial action of the Code Commissioner. Here is the key information you need to know:

REGULATIONS

Who regulates medical cannabis (marijuana)?

The State regulates medical cannabis from seed to sale and controls all aspects of the medical cannabis industry. Section 20-2A-50, Code of Alabama 1975 provides that all functions and activities relating to the production of medical cannabis in the state must be licensed. The Alabama Medical Cannabis Commission licenses and regulates all aspects of medical cannabis except cultivation, which is regulated and licensed by the Department of Agriculture and Industries.

Are municipalities required to allow medical marijuana dispensaries to operate in their municipality?

No. Section 20-2A-51(c) prohibits a dispensary from operating in a municipality UNLESS the municipality has authorized the operation of dispensing sites within its corporate limits.

The council must adopt an ordinance authorizing the operation of dispensing sites within the corporate limits of the municipality and notify the Alabama Medical Cannabis Commission within seven calendar days after adopting the ordinance.

Can the municipality dictate where dispensaries are allowed in a municipality?

Yes. Section 20-2A-51(c)(3) allows municipalities to adopt

zoning ordinances restricting the operation of dispensing sites within their corporate limits. Section 20-2A-64(d)(1) prohibits medical marijuana dispensaries from operating within 1,000 feet from any school, daycare or childcare facility.

Can municipalities charge a sales tax or business license?

Yes. Nothing in the Act prohibits a municipality from charging sales tax on medical marijuana sold at retail or imposing a business license on cultivators, integrated facilities, processors or any person or entity doing business under the Act.

EMPLOYMENT ISSUES

Are municipalities required to accommodate or allow municipal employees to use medical cannabis?

No. Section 20-2A-6(a)(2), Code of Alabama, 1975 states that employers are not required to “permit, accommodate, or allow the use of medical cannabis, or to modify any job or working conditions of any employee who engages in the use of medical cannabis or for any reason seeks to engage in the use of medical cannabis.”

Can municipalities adopt and enforce drug testing policies or implement drug free workplaces that prohibit municipal employees from using medical cannabis in the workplace?

Yes. Section 20-2A-6(a) allows employers to establish and enforce a drug testing policy. It also allows employers to implement a drug-free workforce program and prohibit the use of medical cannabis in the workplace.

Can municipalities refuse to hire individuals who use medical cannabis?

Yes. Section 20-2A-6(a)(3) provides that employers may refuse to hire an individual as a result, in whole or in part, of that individual’s use of medical cannabis, regardless of

the individual's impairment or lack of impairment resulting from the use of medical cannabis.

Can municipalities discipline or terminate municipal employees for using medical cannabis?

Yes. Section 20-2A-6(a)(3) allows employers to discharge, discipline or otherwise take adverse employment action against individuals with respect to discharging, tenure, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment, as a result, in whole or in part, of that individual's use of medical cannabis, regardless of the individual's impairment or lack of impairment resulting from the use of medical cannabis. Section 20-2A-6(c) provides that if an individual is discharged from employment for using medical cannabis or refusing to submit to or cooperate with a drug test, it is presumed that the individual's discharge is for misconduct for purposes of unemployment benefits and workers' compensation.

Can municipalities deny workers' compensation benefits due to a positive drug test or the refusal to submit to a drug test?

Maybe. Section 20-2A-6(a)(10) does not prohibit an

employer's right to deny or establish legal defenses to the payment of workers' compensation benefits to an employee on the basis of a positive drug test or the refusal to submit to a drug test.

Can municipalities require municipal employees to notify them if they have a medical cannabis card?

Yes. Section 20-2A-6(a)(5) provides that employers may require employees to notify their employer if they possess a medical cannabis card.

Are municipalities required to reimburse municipal employees for costs associated with the use of medical cannabis?

No. Section 20-2A-6(a)(8) provides that employers, government medical assistance programs, property or casualty insurers, or private health insurers are not required to reimburse an individual for any costs associated with the use of medical cannabis.

For more information on medical marijuana and its allowable forms and uses, please see Act 2021-450 or contact the League's Legal department. ■

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The Foundational Components of Human Resources

Davis Cooper and Katrina Washington • Government and Economic Development Institute • Auburn University

Today's society is characterized by a myriad of uncertainties and unpredictable circumstances. Oftentimes, this results in dilemmas that organizations must expeditiously address. As the workforce continues to evolve, it is now more important than ever for governmental entities to maintain a current and compliant personnel system to confront and navigate the complexities that human resources often experience.

Central to human resources is the ability to recruit, retain and develop valued employees while advancing the organization to achieve maximum performance and productivity. An effective personnel system acts as a pillar of an organization, and it provides the critical infrastructure and support for the organization. Generally speaking, a personnel system consists of: (1) job descriptions; (2) a classification and pay plan; (3) a policies and procedures manual; and (4) a performance management system. A core objective of any personnel system is to ensure compliance with federal, state and local laws. Ultimately, the personnel system should be the driving force that creates and cultivates a positive, sustainable culture that permeates and shapes the work environment.

Job Descriptions

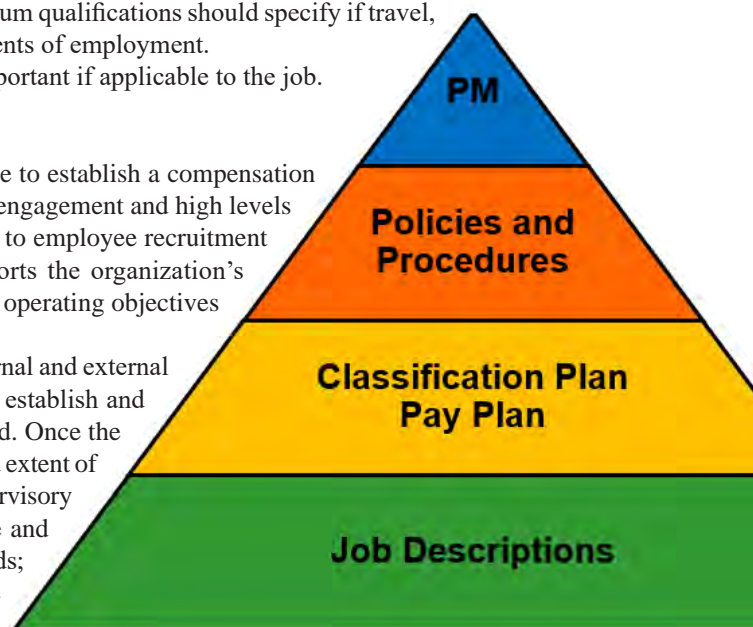
As illustrated in Figure 1, the foundational basis of the personnel system is based on accurate, current and compliant job descriptions. Job descriptions should accurately reflect the essential functions and duties required of the job. It is consistent with "best practices" that job descriptions are: (1) updated every three to five years and no longer than seven years; (2) reviewed, signed off by the appropriate individuals and dated when changes occur; (3) written to reflect the needs of the organization; and (4) directly tied to performance management and performance appraisals. Several components are inherently part of job descriptions. Specifically, job descriptions should encompass and include the following:

- Identifiers – the title of the job; the department where the job is located; and the job's classification grade should all be clearly identified and designated.
- Essential functions – the required and necessary functions of the job should be detailed. These job duties are integral, usually cannot be reassigned and are performed frequently. Essential functions are the reason the job exists.
- Job tasks – job duties should be listed on the job description under each essential function.
- Contacts and their purposes – the types of entities or individuals the incumbent interacts with, both internally and externally, in the performance of the job.
- Physical and sensory engagement required; work environment features or concerns.
- Knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs).
- Minimum qualifications – consists of educational level required for the job (not what the incumbent has attained); work experience (type and length) required; and/or credentials or certifications required (either already attained or attained within a specified timeframe) for consideration of the job. Additional minimum qualifications should specify if travel, a driver's license (specific type) and insurance are conditional elements of employment.
- Background check and drug/alcohol screening – identification is important if applicable to the job.

Compensation

One of the most basic functions within any organization should be to establish a compensation scheme that is competitive and equitable and that promotes employee engagement and high levels of job performance. Competitive compensation practices are essential to employee recruitment and retention efforts. A well-designed compensation structure supports the organization's strategic plan and initiatives, development goals, competitive outlook, operating objectives and compensation and total reward strategies.

A main objective of classification and pay plans is to establish internal and external pay equity. The classification and pay plan of the organization aim to establish and provide a basic grade and salary range for each job listed and approved. Once the job descriptions are written, they are evaluated based on the presence and extent of nine (9) compensable factors: (1) knowledge required by the job; (2) supervisory controls received; (3) guidelines; (4) complexity of the job; (5) scope and effect; (6) personal contacts; (7) purpose of contacts; (8) physical demands; and (9) work environment. These nine (9) factors establish and rank the jobs into different grades and help preserve internal job equity. The



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something larger such as commissioning a mural; or doing something on very grand scale, such as renovating a prominent building in town. Regardless of the scale of your initial project, funds will be needed. And, if your city is anything like ours, funds are hard to come by. Over the years, we developed some creative ways of securing funds and implementing projects. In the case of the unsightly natural gas substation, we picked up the phone and contacted our gas company. When we tracked down the correct person, he was happy to assist with funds for the landscaping and fence painting and then later provided even more support to beautify the corner. When we needed to secure a facility to serve as a recycling center, we reached out to Alabama Power to request the use of a vacant building they owned. They were happy to lease that building to us because they were ensured an occupant who would care for the facility. They later donated the entire building to us. We also learned that we could partner with CommuteSmart to get free bicycle racks installed throughout town. Regions Bank helped us kick off our bike share by providing us with donated bicycles. We also wrote grants and generated revenue in other traditional ways such as raising our sales tax and fees for some services. Regardless of how a city secures funds, the message is clear: small amenities can make a big impact and serve as the catalyst for substantial and sustained change.

Plans typically include a vision of bringing more people to town to experience all that you have to offer and, of course, contribute to your economy along the way. Signature events are one means by which to do this. In our case, we capitalized on the strength of our thriving art community. Over the past few years, we initiated downtown ArtWalks, a wood-carving festival (TingleWood), a spring arts fest, Love Montevallo Day, Fridays at the Cove and hosted the “Just Show Up Show” by iHeartRadio.

Embracing Community Diversity

Perhaps most important in unlocking the keys to your community’s full potential is embracing the diversity of your

community. As leaders we all recognize that not everyone in our community looks like us, thinks like us or has our same family structure. In Montevallo, we are fortunate to have a large Hispanic population, a broad diversity of religious and non-religious individuals, dedicated youth, energetic seniors and engaged LGBTQ and African American populations. As such, we were committed to ensuring that these populations were represented across boards and committees and felt welcomed and embraced at all public meetings and gatherings. But regardless of our commitment, some deep wounds needed healing that soon rose to the surface.

One issue that was brought to the surface was the need for our LGBTQ population to feel truly safe and valued and free from discrimination in our community. The best means by which to do this was for a city to pass a non-discrimination ordinance. In 2016, our local LGBTQ advocacy group made this request of our city council. After 16 months of community dialogue, in 2018 our council passed an ordinance that provided our LGBTQ population with this assurance and protection. Not long after the passage of this ordinance, a coalition brought to the council’s attention that far back in the history of our city, there were lynchings on our Main Street. These lynchings had been swept under the rug and the men’s names long forgotten. To begin a healing process, this coalition requested that the city install a historic marker attesting and providing historical context to this tragedy. Panel discussions ensued and the city council again voted to support a population that has been historically disenfranchised. We did this with the support of the Equal Justice Initiative and many dedicated community members. Fully embracing diversity is challenging, even painful at times, but is critical if your leadership truly desires to have a flourishing community.

While most paths to progress will not be linear and no one path is the same, by truly working together and following a well-developed plan, communities can transition from a town with potential to a showcase community and genuinely flourish. ■



Hollie served as the Mayor of the City of Montevallo from 2012 until 2020, beginning her civic service as a Montevallo City Councilmember in 2004. During her tenure as mayor, the city completed over \$10 million in capital projects including, among other key projects, a complete Main Street renovation, a 167-acre park development and the construction of a new city hall. Hollie has more than 25 years of teaching experience, serving as a Professor of Special Education at the University of Montevallo, and Stephen F. Austin State University as well as a special education teacher at Loachapoka Elementary School. She has launched a number of initiatives that focus on individual and family well-being such as: Thrive Together Shelby County, Montevallo Connection, University of Montevallo Service Learning, Future Falcons, Falcon Scholars in Action, ESL programming, after-school tutoring, Falcon Flight, Montevallo Junior City Council and David Mathews Center for Civic Life Students' Institute. For this work she has received numerous recognitions including the Albert Schweitzer Fellowship Humanitarian of the Year, Vulcan Spear Game Changer Award, Alabama Main Street Hero Award, Gulf-South Summit Outstanding Service-Learning Collaboration Award and Auburn's Academy for Civic Professionalism Alumni Award. Additionally, she is a graduate of Leadership Alabama. Hollie now serves as the Assistant Vice President of University Outreach and Public Service at Auburn University, enabling her to further her mission of service to the state of Alabama.

Alabama Communities of Excellence Announces Class of 2021

Aliceville • Ashville • Luverne • Ozark

Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE) announced this past August that the board of directors approved Aliceville, Ashville, Luverne, and Ozark to join the program.

The application process kicked off in May with an announcement from ACE Board President and Chair Carrie Banks at the Alabama League of Municipalities (ALM) Convention and Expo. ACE welcomed mayors of Alabama communities with a qualifying population of 2,000 to 18,000 to apply for the program by a July 31 deadline. The four cities selected for the 2021 class started Phase I of the ACE program this fall. The ACE program consists of three phases. Phase I focuses on community assessment, while Phase II concentrates on leadership development and strategic planning. Phase III wraps up the program with comprehensive planning and implementing the strategic plan.

“Community and economic development are critical to the health and vitality of Alabama’s smaller and rural municipalities,” Banks said. “ACE is specifically designed to engage a broad range of community stakeholders to develop and implement both short and long-range plans to improve and expand the quality of life for each city and town by focusing on the unique assets, resources, values and concerns of the community.”

ACE provides community leaders with training and workshops to develop vision and mission statements, implementation strategies, and a sustainable leadership development program. Each community is assigned a team of experts from the ACE Associates Council to guide them through the program.

ACE strives to guarantee widespread geographic coverage across the state. Forty-two cities have successfully completed the program to be designated as “Alabama Communities of Excellence,” which are Alexander City, Arab, Atmore, Bay Minette, Boaz, Brewton, Center Point, Childersburg, Demopolis, Elba, Eufaula, Evergreen, Fairhope, Fayette, Foley, Gardendale, Geneva, Graysville, Guin, Gulf Shores, Guntersville, Haleyville, Hanceville, Hartselle, Headland, Heflin, Helena, Jackson, Jacksonville, Jasper, Leeds, Livingston, Millbrook, Monroeville, Montevallo, Oneonta, Rainsville, Saraland, Spanish Fort, Tallassee, Thomasville and Valley. Currently, Abbeville, Chelsea, Florala and Red Bay are working through the phases of the ACE program.

ACE’s partner organizations are vital to the success of the program. The program’s 2021 partners include Alabama Department of Commerce, Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs, Alabama League of Municipalities, 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, Byard Associates, LLC, David Mathews Center for Civic Life, Goodwyn Mills Cawood, Regions Bank, Spire, The University of Alabama Center for Economic Development, The University of West Alabama and United States Department of Agriculture – Rural Development (USDA-RD). ACE also received grant funding from the USDA-RD program and Alabama State Council on the Arts.

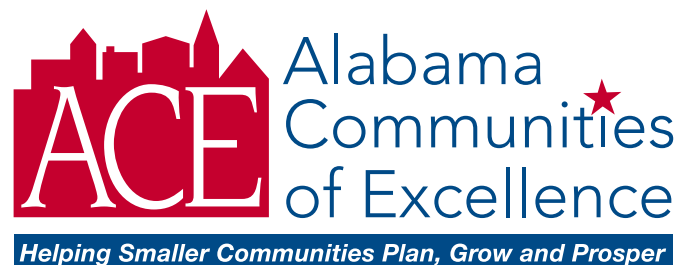
About ACE – www.alabamacommunitiesofexcellence.org

Alabama Communities of Excellence was created in 2002 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization to provide assistance to select communities with qualifying populations of 2,000 to 18,000. For 19 years, ACE has provided small communities across the state with the resources and knowledge necessary to focus on the importance of planning, leadership development and broad-based community engagement to ensure long-term economic success. ACE principles include:

- Active involvement by stakeholders across a broad demographic spectrum.
- Development of local leaders and leadership capacity.
- Emphasis on developing and implementing plans to realize the municipality’s vision.

The main criteria used in selecting ACE participants are: 1) the level of commitment to the ACE program; 2) the community’s capacity to support the ACE program and 3) the provision of complete and accurate information in the application. Once a community has been accepted into the ACE program, it must identify a local ACE coordinator. This local coordinator will not only spearhead ACE efforts locally, but will also serve as the liaison between ACE and the community. The ACE process begins with Phase I, known as the assessment phase. The timeframe for completion of the ACE program varies from community to community; however, communities are encouraged to successfully complete the program within three years.

To maintain the Alabama Community of Excellence designation, a community must be recertified within three to five years following its original designation. Recertification is based on the ACE Community’s progress in implementing its plans and its progress towards approaching ACE Community Standards as stated in Definition of an ACE Community. ■



Municipal Websites – A Must-Have for Every Community

Victoria Boyko • Website Project Manager • VC3

Despite the critical importance of a website in today's world, too many municipalities still do not have an online presence. Recently, VC3 analyzed Alabama's municipalities to see how many had a website. **After crunching the numbers, we found that approximately 41 percent of Alabama municipalities do not have a website.** Further, out of the 59 percent *with* websites, many are outdated and lack essential features for residents.

In 2021, when so many people go online to research and look for information and when much of our existence has been virtual during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is perplexing that so many municipalities still operate without a website. No longer a “nice to have,” websites are now a must because of how often people use the internet. If you are not visible on the internet, then it appears as if you don't exist. Or, if other websites or online platforms talk about you on your behalf, then you are not in control of your messaging. Prior to the rise of social media platforms 15 years ago, a website or online presence may not have been quite as important. Today, however, it is imperative.

For example, the City of Vincent recently improved its productivity and online reputation with a modernized website. Using the ALM-endorsed IT in a Box program, the city redesigned its website to give its online presence a fresh look and feel. The current website now presents visitors with bold visuals that show off the city to website visitors, clearer organization of information and the ability for city staff to now update and edit content.

Five Reasons Your Municipality Needs a Website

Municipalities are missing out on so many opportunities and low-hanging fruit by not having a website. Here are five of the most important reasons to get a municipal website as soon as possible – or risk falling further behind in marketing your municipality to the world while also serving your residents.

1. A website is your online City Hall. What's more likely: (a) someone will stop by City Hall to learn more about your city or (b) someone will look at your website to learn more about your city? The answer, far and away, is (b). Most people now access the internet, especially through their mobile phones, as their primary method of seeking information about an item of interest. It's become easy, convenient and instinctive for people to begin their search online. So, when your municipality doesn't show up with a website online, it's like a resident showing up to a City Hall address and finding an empty lot. Think of your website like your online city hall. Welcome people. Orient them to your services. Help them find the information they need. A website offers residents and visitors a sense of your city and a sign that you are there to greet them. Today, a digital greeting is as important – and perhaps more important – than an in-person greeting.

2. A website offers more transparent government and encourages more active residents. It is difficult and inconvenient to stay informed about city council activity when residents must show up in person – either to city council meetings or to City



The City of Vincent recently improved its productivity and online reputation with a modernized website that gives its online presence a fresh look and feel, clearer organization of information and the ability for city staff to now update and edit content.

Hall to access meeting times, agendas and minutes. Placing these materials online creates a more transparent government by making information easily accessible. Going digital with city council also increases resident engagement as people are more likely to stay informed and interact with elected officials. You also ensure that primary sources of information are readily available to counter angry citizens on social media or inaccurate media reporting.

3. A website encourages businesses to locate to your municipality. Imagine I'm the owner of a business that is expanding or wanting to relocate. I'm looking at 10 municipalities in a specific area of Alabama, including your municipality. Six have a website that details how they help businesses, what amenities exist and why their city is a wonderful place to live. Four cities, including yours, have no website.

Your lack of website speaks volumes. It's logical to make the deduction that the six cities with a website have a better business climate than the four without. Why? If you don't communicate, people make their own assumptions.

- “There's probably nothing going on in that city.”
- “The city's leadership is not progressive.”
- “Apparently no one has anything to brag about at that city!”
- “Maybe they're closed off, unfriendly to outsiders and want to keep out businesses.”

A website allows you to counter these incorrect assumptions. You can reach out to prospective businesses when they are researching new locations and highlight what makes your city a great place to locate. Many municipalities also have downtown development projects that benefit from a website highlighting this

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Tuscumbia Community Leaders and Residents Join Together in DesignPlace Planning Initiative

Jessica Armstrong for DesignAlabama

Alabama boasts many distinctive towns that radiate a special quality and identity. One that tops the list is Tuscumbia, part of the Florence-Muscle Shoals Metropolitan Area. Incorporated in 1820, it's one of Alabama's oldest communities whose charming downtown is noted for its large inventory of historic buildings. Yet even the best communities can make improvements. That's what brought a team of designers to Tuscumbia to brainstorm ideas and generate solutions through DesignPlace, a local design and planning initiative sponsored by DesignAlabama. Residents and community leaders joined forces with design professionals to find ways to make Tuscumbia an even better place to live, work and visit.

Community Identification

Jason Fondren, an urban designer with KPS Group, served as team facilitator. He and his team identified several noteworthy assets that can be built on in Tuscumbia's revitalization efforts, such as its historic downtown, small town atmosphere and Helen Keller's birthplace. In addition, its green space, known as the Commons and Spring Park, is a downtown attraction featuring a 51-foot fountain and a waterfall constructed with more than 2,000 tons of sandstone.



Fondren said Tuscumbia citizens expressed interest in boosting tourism and accelerating private investment in their downtown in retail, restaurants and residential development. The team recommended improving community gateways so visitors know when they have entered Tuscumbia and also as a means to foster civic pride. Therefore, a top priority is to develop a new brand identity to help market Tuscumbia to potential visitors and a wayfinding signage system to lead visitors to all destinations Tuscumbia has to offer, Fondren explained.

Such a plan would begin by creating the new brand identity with associated graphics and then prepare a wayfinding master plan. The new community brand would be incorporated in the design of wayfinding signs. Fondren said the sign system would likely be fabricated and installed in phases due to cost.

Developing the north section of the Commons for passive recreational use was also recommended. The Commons green space, Fondren believes, was intended to surround the original city limits. It was laid out as a large rectangle, but only the north side of the rectangle ended up as a linear green space, he added, and the east and west sides became streets. To increase downtown residential development, the team suggested moving the public works department out of its present location between the downtown and historic district, replacing it with housing and then completing a private project to turn the adjacent former board of education building into additional housing.

Community Assessment

A major benefit of DesignPlace is community involvement, noted Tuscumbia Mayor Kerry Underwood, who appreciates the forum DesignPlace provided that allowed citizens to express their ideas. "Tuscumbia has many historically significant assets that are not only locally important, but internationally as well," he pointed out. "One of the ideas we presented was how we can better connect those assets and make them more of a part of our everyday lives. This is true not only for those who live here, but for our tourism guests as well. The project that I was most intrigued by was their designed use of our Commons area on the north side of the city."

What remains of the Commons is the best example of the grassy square that was laid out around the entire city when originally platted in 1817, he noted. Set aside for public use, it is predominantly undeveloped green space that would be better served as usable green space.

"The design team envisioned a beautiful space connected by walking trails and sculpture gardens that allow for all citizenship to enjoy outside activities at an area that is uniquely Tuscumbia. The funding and completion of this area would be of high interest to

Tuscumbia residents participated in DesignPlace planning initiative.



me because of it's linking to our past while enabling current use as a quality-of-life improvement."

Councilman William Foster agreed that DesignPlace was a good fit for Tuscumbia, and he also appreciated how the team found innovative ways to implement the citizen's ideas as well as how the design professionals managed to identify problems and suggest solutions that were "not even on our radar."

Citizens want to increase connectivity and make their town accessible to all, along with attracting more businesses and customers to the downtown district while maintaining its historical significance. The Tuscumbia Historic District contains 461 contributing properties and covers about 232 acres of the town's original boundaries. The oldest houses in the district are Tidewater-type cottages, a style native to the Middle Atlantic. The district also contains some of the oldest commercial buildings in Alabama and a block known as Commercial Row developed in the mid-1830s.

Foster said Tuscumbia is one of only two cities in the United States – Boston being the other – with a Commons that surrounds the entire city. Tuscumbia is also noted for Ivy Green, the birthplace of Helen Keller, and an annual Native American gathering called Oka Kapassa held in Spring Park. Additionally, Tuscumbia is home to the Alabama Music Hall of Fame.

"We have such a great town and the people of Tuscumbia are great," Foster said. "Simple things as in signage, branding and use of space is key to bring it all together and make us noticeable. Tuscumbia is a small city of less than 9,000 in population. We are one of four cities that makes up the Shoals, so it is hard to compete with other cities in the same area. Getting our own identity without disrupting what we have is tough." Foster embraced the idea of creating a logo for branding purposes, likely to be implemented early and to include waypoints and signage throughout the city. He also favors the proposed use of green space and walking trails, and would like to see these enhancements implemented soon.

Working with the city to help make DesignPlace a success was Carson Brite, a senior at the University of North Alabama in Florence who serves as an assistant to Mayor Underwood. Brite assisted with logistics such as scheduling and making arrangements for the design team's visit. "Additionally, I had the opportunity to participate in several brainstorming sessions regarding Tuscumbia's unique opportunities," he said. "This included a visit to Montgomery to strategize with the DesignAlabama team, as well as multiple site visits." Brite said he gained a unique perspective on the relationship between local governments and the range of services and organizations they partner with to deliver improvements to their constituents.

"Being able to assist Mayor Underwood in this process has certainly improved my ability to navigate complex projects while remaining consistently effective throughout," added Brite, who is majoring in political science with a minor in public administration.

On the design team with Fondren were Amy Smith, a landscape architect with Studio A Design; Andrew Bryant, an architect with Design Initiative; Stephen Schrader, a landscape architect with Renta Urban Land Design; and Nathan Willingham, a planner with Rural Innovation Strategies. Challenges are part of any ambitious endeavor. For Tuscumbia, this includes securing funding for proposed public projects and gaining control over a key downtown building, which until recently housed an essential downtown business but is now vacant, noted Fondren. Another challenge is finding effective ways to increase tourism. Tuscumbia and its neighboring towns collectively contain many interesting places and activities that can attract significantly more visitors. By working together, the communities in the Shoals can significantly increase tourism. A win-win for the entire region.

For more information on community programs offered by DesignAlabama, visit designalabama.org. ■

Municipal Websites — continued from page 44

important revitalization work. When municipalities promote their downtown development projects online, it's attractive to businesses that may want to set up shop.

4. A website offers online services to residents. Many people are now accustomed to paying bills, accessing services and interacting with organizations online. Also, our society is not as 9-to-5 as it was in the past. People work multiple jobs at all hours, shuttle their children to school and activities and travel a lot more than in the past. It helps if people can pay taxes and fines, submit a business license or sign up for a utility service online. You are doing a great service for residents if you introduce online payments, forms and services—making your services more accessible and convenient.

5. A website promotes tourism and attracts future residents. Your website gives you an opportunity to brag. What attractions exist in your municipality? What events and festivals take place? What are the natural attractions? Museums? Entertainment? Many people like to take local or regional trips either for the day or a weekend. How are you promoting the best aspects of your municipality?

Even if you think there is not much to promote, you would be surprised at what treasures exist in your city. List them out; ask

your residents what they love most about your municipality; and put these attractions on your website.

Conclusion

Without a website, you're missing opportunities to highlight to the world *why* your town or city is special. Website options exist that are extremely cost-effective and allow for custom design, online payments and easy-to-upload content (requiring very little technical skill). If you want learn more about a municipal website, especially if you currently lack one, contact ALM Director of Information Technology Chuck Stephenson at (334) 262-2566 to learn more about the ALM-endorsed IT in a Box program. There is a solution for your community. ■

Victoria is a web project manager at VC3. Born in Kiev, Ukraine, she holds a bachelor's degree in education from the National Pedagogical Dragomanov University in Kiev. After moving to Georgia in 1996, she studied computer programming at Gwinnett Technical College and she's been developing software for more than 20 years. In her spare time, she enjoys spending time with her family, and pursuing her hobbies of photography, cooking and gardening.

Psychological Evaluations: Another Tool in the Toolbox

Louis G. Zook, CLEE • Police Safety Consultant • AMIC/MWCF

It is rare for any police department to operate at full capacity, with all their sworn officer positions filled. Regardless of their size, location, salary, benefits or other opportunities, most departments are in a continuous recruitment, pre-employment and hiring mode. In Alabama, even departments that previously did not have to recruit and always had a surplus of applicants are struggling to fill their vacancies – many have resorted to advertising on billboards and television.

As a result, the pre-employment process is more important than ever before. With a limited applicant pool, no one wants to simply hire a “warm body” or an individual that is later determined unsuitable for the position. To avoid this scenario, agencies conduct a variety of written tests, interviews, physical ability/agility tests, oral boards, polygraph tests, drug testing and background checks. Almost all agencies perform some, if not all, of these activities in the hopes of finding one (or more) quality candidate.

More than 50 years ago, conducting a psychological evaluation was recommended by the President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice (1967), and is considered a best practice by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP). Even so, state laws and agency practices within each state vary. Until recently, the psychological evaluation requirement in Alabama was extremely limited and, subsequently, this screening tool was one of the most under utilized pre-employment practices in law enforcement.

APOSTC Requires Psychological Evaluations for All Applicants

Beginning January 1, 2021, the Alabama Peace Officers’ Standards and Training Commission (APOSTC) requires that “all applicants selected to attend the Law Enforcement Basic, and Lateral/Refresher academies, must undergo a psychological evaluation ... by a Licensed Behavioral Health Professional.” (Review APOSTC Rule 650-X-2-.04 in its entirety at www.apostc.alabama.gov.) Previously APOSTC only required a psychological evaluation for applicants with a misdemeanor conviction involving force, violence or moral turpitude.

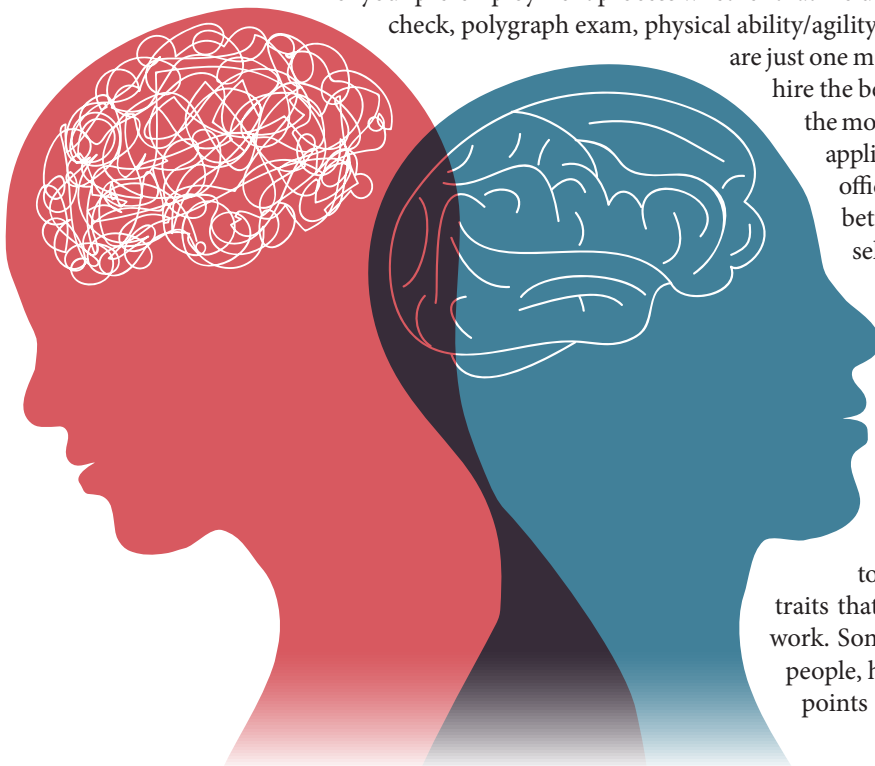
While some Alabama agencies conduct psychological evaluations of all applicants as a part of their pre-employment process, most do not. A recent survey of nearly 300 municipal law enforcement agencies in Alabama found that less than 20 percent conducted psychological evaluations for all new hires regardless of certification or prior experience.

Obviously with the new APOSTC rule, all agencies must conduct psychological evaluations for applicants to either the basic or the lateral/refresher academy. However, if an agency hires a certified officer from another agency those individuals are not subject to the rule requiring a psychological evaluation unless the agency chooses to do so. So this begs the question of whether psychological evaluations are important and if so, why? A simple, straightforward response is yes. They are important for the same reason you conduct any part of your pre-employment process whether that includes a basic abilities test, background investigation, credit

check, polygraph exam, physical ability/agility testing or medical screening. Psychological evaluations are just one more tool that many police agencies use to ensure that they hire the best candidate for the job. The more complete the process, the more accurate and detailed the information pertaining to the applicant’s suitability to serve successfully as a law enforcement officer will likely be. In other words, the more you know; the better decision you can make; the better applicant you can select; and the more likely you will avoid making a bad hire.

Psychological Evaluations Can Identify Personality Traits and Significant Disorders

What can the evaluation tell us? We all know and agree that the daily demands placed upon a law enforcement officer can be challenging. While police officer personalities may vary, there are certain traits all officers should ideally share, including honesty, integrity and sound judgment. Psychological evaluations are used to identify any significant disorders as well as personality traits that would not be conducive to the expectations of police work. Someone who does not possess the skills to converse with people, has no interest in solving problems, is unable to see both points of view in a conflict, or exhibits indicators of rigidity,



overconfidence, or an authoritarian personality, could all be considered undesirable in law enforcement.

Pre-employment psychological screening evaluates several personality traits to help identify if an applicant would be a good choice, including: General intelligence, judgment, dependability, honesty, integrity, personal bias or lack of bias, impulse control, stress/worry/anxiety, aggressiveness/anger, antisocial behavior, ability to perform boring/tedious tasks, ability to deal with supervision, appropriate attitudes towards sexuality and substance abuse.

These traits and others represent areas that have been determined over time to be important when evaluating a law enforcement applicant. Police officers are held to high standards, and these evaluations can help to identify applicants who may be unacceptable or undesirable.

The Ideal Evaluation

The ideal evaluation should include several elements including a pretest self-interview, a multiple-choice test, followed by an in-person interview with a Licensed Behavioral Health Professional that has experience working with law enforcement professionals. The evaluation itself might vary depending upon the evaluator; the specific assessment test used; and the interview style and questions used during the in-person interview.

The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2 (MMPI-2) Police Candidate Interpretive Report (PCIR) is one of the most commonly administered tests and is designed specifically for pre-employment psychological evaluation of a law enforcement applicant. Other frequently used tests include the PAI (Personality Assessment Inventory), IPI2 (the Inward Personality Inventory 2), COPS-R (the Candidate and Officer Personnel Survey Revised) and M-PULSE (Matrix-Predictive Uniform Law Enforcement Selection Evaluation Inventory).

Once complete, the acquired information is used to determine an applicant's suitability for the law enforcement profession. The results are usually expressed in one of three ways: (1) Recommend for employment; (2) Recommend with caution *(list concerns and recommendations); and (3) Not recommended for employment.

It is important to note that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) imposes strict limits on an employer's ability to require medical examinations of job applicants. An examination is medical if it seeks information about an individual's physical or mental impairments or health. Subsequently, a pre-employment psychological evaluation, as with drug testing or a physical medical examination, should only occur after successful completion of all other (non-medical) portions of the pre-employment process and a conditional offer of employment has been made.

In addition, the ADA has several other requirements that apply to all job applicants. One of particular interest states that "all job candidates applying for the same job category are required to take the examination, not just those suspected of or with a history of having a medical condition." Any agency that is conducting psychological evaluations only on specific applicants may need to discuss this issue with its Human Resources Office, Legal Department or Employment Law Attorney.

Conclusion

The bottom line is that psychological evaluations are another tool in your pre-employment toolbox. The evaluation results, in conjunction with the other tools can assist you in finding the most qualified and best suited individual for your agency. In today's environment, agencies should strongly consider conducting this valuable assessment on all law enforcement applicants regardless of prior experience, certification or any other factors. ■

Resource List:

- Alabama Peace Officers' Standards and Training Commission: www.apostc.alabama.gov
- American with Disabilities Act: www.ada.gov
- International Association of Chiefs of Police: www.theiacp.org
- MMPI-2-PCIR: www.pearsonassessments.com/content/dam/school/global/clinical/us/assets/MMPI-2-RF/mmpi-2-rf-pcir-user-guide.pdf



Louis Zook is a Police Safety Consultant with the AMIC/MWCF Loss Control Division responsible for traveling to member police departments throughout the state to reduce municipal liability and employee injuries. Louis retired in 2018 after 37 years in law enforcement, including service as Chief of Staff for the Alabama Peace Officers' Standards & Training Commission (APOSTC), Law Enforcement Coordinator for the Alabama Attorney General's Office and nearly 17 years as the Chief of Police in Sylacauga. He attended Gadsden State Community College, the University of Virginia and Jacksonville State University, and is a graduate of the Alabama Police Academy and the FBI National Academy. He is recognized as a Certified Police Chief by the Alabama Association of Chiefs of Police (AACOP) and a Certified Law Enforcement Executive by the Alabama Peace Officer's Standards and Training Commission.

classification plan should: (1) include a grouping of jobs in classes which are similar in duties and responsibilities, and which can be equitably compensated within the same range of pay, and (2) detail a list showing the job title of each job within each grade. Overall, the classification plan should be reflective of the jobs.

With the grade structure established, benchmarking of pay ranges is accomplished to develop a pay structure that is competitive with the surrounding market. The pay benchmarking helps preserve external equity within a given employment market. The pay plan should consist of various steps to include at least a starting minimum, mid-point and ending maximum rates of pay for every grade within the classification plan. Generally speaking, all persons hired or promoted should be compensated at the minimum point of the salary range for that position and all employees should be paid at a rate within the salary range for their position, except employees in trainee status, or (on rare occasions) employees whose existing salaries are above the established maximum for their position. In pay, external equity refers to the relative amount an employer pays workers compared to what competitors pay workers in similar jobs. A primary purpose of ensuring external pay equity is to attract and retain talented workers across all positions.

Policies and Procedures Manual

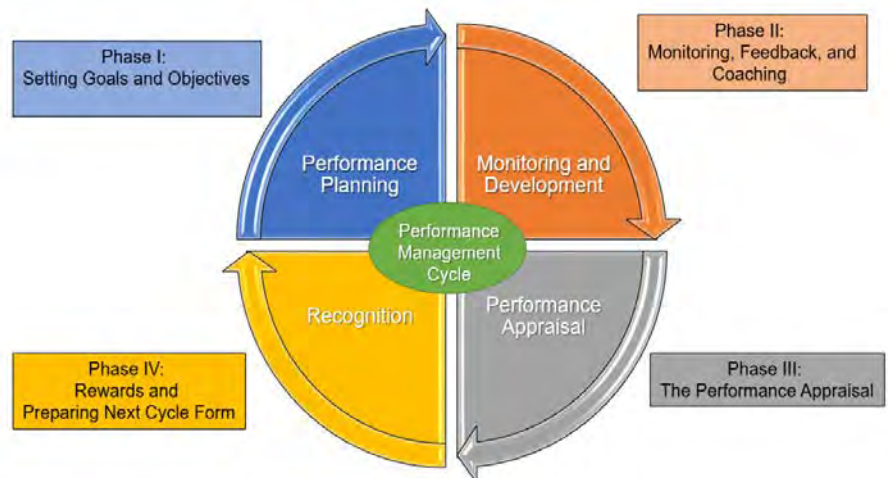
A current and compliant Policies and Procedures Manual establishes and facilitates the culture of the organization. A Policies and Procedures Manual, not to be confused with a “handbook,” which is typically an excerpt of the manual, is one of the most overlooked and underutilized tools in the workplace. It has been likened to a road map in employment where it serves as a guide through the various phases of employment status.

Organizations should embrace a culture that supports the manual and fully utilizes it, regularly reviews and revises policies and procedures and takes new regulations, standards, technology and structural changes into account. The Policies and Procedures Manual provides insight into the day-to-day operations of the organization. It is the responsibility of the employee and supervisor to have a working knowledge of the manual. Supervisors should also have an open-door policy and allow employees to seek answers to questions and/or resolve concerns. The Policies and Procedures Manual should be distributed to each employee upon hiring, provide documentation of employee receipt where the employee signed and dated, and updated/revised when laws change, or new laws are added. Overall, an organization’s Policies and Procedures Manual needs to be easily accessible to all employees, current and up-to-date and compliant with established laws.

Performance Management System

Finally, organizations should possess an ongoing and continuous performance management system. This performance management system should be directly correlated to current and compliant job descriptions.

As illustrated in Figure 2, the Performance Management Cycle is a continuous process that requires ongoing evaluation, assessment and feedback. The supervisor and employee should both set goals and objectives at the beginning of the performance management process. Phase II consists of the supervisor assessing, monitoring and providing feedback to the employee throughout the performance period. Phase III represents the actual completion and discussion of the performance appraisal session. Finally, Phase IV represents any rewards or recognition and culminating in preparing for the next year with establishing goals and objectives. The overall purpose of performance management systems is to develop people and teams to improve their performance and the greater organization. ■



Davis Cooper, IPMA-SCP, is a Human Resources Consultant at Auburn University's Government and Economic Development Institute. Davis has over 10 years of direct experience in the development of human resources programs and over 35 years in operations management providing design, implementation, delivery and management support expertise facilitating educational programs.



Katrina Washington, IPMA-SCP, is a Human Resources Consultant at Auburn University's Government and Economic Development Institute. She is currently a PhD candidate at Auburn University in the Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership and Technology.



Mayor Earl Johnson has led a Renaissance in Andalusia. He is shown here in front of the Prestwood Building where he practiced law when he returned to Andalusia after law school. The City now owns the building and recently entered an agreement with CDG Engineers and Associates, which is buying the building and moving its corporate headquarters to downtown Andalusia. The city's involvement, coupled with historic tax credits, has made downtown revitalization possible.

pedestrian friendly. With the help of countless investments from businesses and individuals, the City constructed a Miracle League baseball field and park designed to improve the quality of life for children who have accessibility challenges. A few years later, the City partnered with Andalusia City Schools and the Public Education Building Authority, and raised from private sources more than \$1 million of the \$13 million used to transform the high school's auditorium and football field. Both now elicit "wows" from first-time visitors.

"Often, people who come here from out of town come to football games or band contests at our stadium," Johnson said. "We wanted a facility that would make a great first impression when visitors came here, sending a message that Andalusia is a special place. We also wanted to be ready when the Alabama High School Athletic Association begins televising games. I think we accomplished both of those goals."

Success Builds Success

The success of the initial public-private partnerships generated more interest in Andalusia. An Andalusia native whose interest was piqued introduced city leaders to Steven Binger, founder of Concordia, a New Orleans-based architectural and planning firm. Concordia's first work with Andalusia was in the redesign of the former Coca-Cola bottling facility as a tap house, The B, which is slated to open in the third quarter of 2021.

With input from Concordia, City officials expanded their thinking and began taking a more comprehensive approach to community planning. In early 2020, the City acquired 18 mostly-vacant but historic buildings in the downtown area. Mayor Johnson announced the acquisition in a town hall meeting on March 10, 2020, complete with concept drawings from Concordia to help residents and investors reimagine what their community might become.

"That was also the week that pandemic shut-downs began," the mayor said. "We were worried we would still be sitting here waiting to develop all of the property when the pandemic was over. But we've been very fortunate in Andalusia to have our strong economy continue through 2020 and into 2021, and interest in our downtown acquisitions never slowed."

In June of 2020 – while much of the state was shut down by the pandemic – the city finalized its first agreement for the newly-acquired buildings when it partnered with Andy Gibson and Draftstone Properties to renovate a building locally known as The Opera House. Gibson's development plan called for three commercial spaces downstairs and eight apartments upstairs. A little more than a year later, the commercial space boasts a fudge shop, and renovations are underway for the other two. One will house a spa; the other the real estate company Gibson has since formed.

Working with Concordia and Mobile historic preservation expert Stephen McNair, the City learned how to capitalize on historic tax credits available at both the state and national levels, which makes the costly redevelopment of historic buildings more affordable. The City also found an investor, Gatewood and Sons, with whom to partner to develop housing in an existing neighborhood, where existing infrastructure makes projects more affordable. By renovating existing homes, replacing declining properties with period designs, and forming a Homeowners Association, the partnership is producing a Garden District that is walkable from the downtown area.

"People come from all over to eat there," Johnson said. "I can walk in there when the restaurant's full and not see anybody I know, because they're not from here. And that's our goal – to develop Andalusia as a destination, as opposed to a place people pass through on the way to the beach."

As that project was developing, a second public-private partnership saved the historic downtown theatre. The O'Neal family, who had owned the building for decades, donated it to the City in exchange for a tax letter. The city then worked with the longtime tenant, Clark Theatres, to renovate the building with a boutique concept, including an upscale snack bar and reclining chairs. Like Big Mike's, Clark Theatres has a long-term lease.

Meanwhile, the City reworked the entrances to the downtown area, moving power lines underground and installing street lamps, and added miles of sidewalks, making downtown and residential areas more

Now in his fifth term, Johnson's come somewhat full circle. In June, the City announced a public-private partnership to renovate the Prestwood Building, where he first practiced law all those years ago. CDG Engineers and Associates, which has offices all over Alabama, is purchasing the building from the City and will renovate the second floor to become home for 40 to 50 corporate and local employees.

Downstairs, the owners of Big Mike's plan to build on their local success when they open a new concept restaurant, Luie's. Town and Country Boutique also will move to the space in the historic Prestwood Building.

And the interest hasn't waned. Where city officials once spent days knocking on doors to generate interest, they now spend a good amount of time answering the door when investors come knocking. Negotiations are under way for a boutique hotel in the downtown area, and planning has begun for a new park.

"We can't rest on our laurels," Johnson said. "We have to keep working to make sure Andalusia offers a quality of life that makes it attractive to young families, to prospective employees, prospective businesses and to retirees." ■



Michele Gerlach is the communications director for the City of Andalusia. Prior to joining the City, she worked as a newspaper publisher and editor in Andalusia, Brewton and Atmore, and did a PR stint in the Alabama College System. She also co-owned a restaurant in Atmore with her husband, Tom, until his retirement.

Andalusia Timeline

- 2000 – Earl Johnson elected Mayor of Andalusia
- 2003 – Renovation of historic East Three Notch Elementary as City Hall is completed
- 2008 – City begins working with the Andalusia Ballet in the first of many public-private partnerships to preserve historic structures
- 2011 – City partners with Chamber to develop former AlateX headquarters
- 2015 – City begins working with recruitment and real estate firm Retail Strategies to attract new businesses
- 2016 – City partners with Big Mike's to open a restaurant downtown
- 2016 – City partners with Clark Theatres to renovate a donated building as a boutique theater
- 2018 – City leads effort to renovate Andalusia High School stadium and auditorium with more than \$1 million coming from private funds
- 2018 – City teams with Concordia to create comprehensive master plan
- 2019 – City partners with local residents to develop former Coca-Cola bottling company as a tap house
- 2019 – City partners with Gatewood and Sons to revitalize an older neighborhood as a garden district
- 2020 – City acquires 18 historic structures and five acres in the downtown area
- 2020 – City partners with Draftstone Properties to develop Opera House with retail and residential spaces
- 2021 – City partners with CDG Engineers and Associates to develop Prestwood Building as corporate headquarters, restaurant and boutique

For more about Andalusia: www.cityofandalusia.com



The former headquarters of AlateX, a major textile manufacturer, sat empty behind a decaying fence for years after the company pulled out in the 1990s. The City acquired the property, and entered a partnership with the Andalusia Area Chamber of Commerce to refurbish it as their office and welcome center. The big shirt in the foreground is a nod to thousands of people who worked for AlateX, and a mural on the retaining wall tells the history of textiles in the county. At one time, all of the steps in making a dress shirt were done in the county, from growing cotton, to weaving fabric, to cutting, sewing and packaging dress shirts.

Ainsworth — continued from page 12

schools. Our state was also among the first to pass legislation ensuring occupational licensing reciprocity for military dependents, which is a complicated way of saying a military spouse, for example, who is licensed to practice accounting in another state is also allowed to practice locally while stationed in Alabama.

We are continuing to work with state boards and agencies overseeing dozens of professions to extend the reach of the reciprocity law during the 2022 session.

I also have a keen interest in job training and the important role it plays in economic development, as evidenced by my creation of the Lieutenant Governor's Commission on a 21st Century Workforce, and we will continue to protect Alabama's role as a national leader in that area, as well.

Given the many challenges that our state faces, the 2022 regular session promises to be a busy one with a lively discussion of issues, and I certainly invite the members of the League of Municipalities to reach out to me with any thoughts, suggestions or ideas you may wish to offer. ■

Reed — continued from page 13

budget chairmen passed the largest Education Trust Fund and General Fund budgets in our state's history. We will have an energized approach this session in appropriating these dollars in a way that will give the maximum benefit to municipalities across Alabama. We look forward to working with the League of Municipalities and other groups as we find the best ways to utilize these resources.

Another area of focus will be increasing broadband access. As I mentioned earlier, we made important progress on this issue in the last session, and it will be a top priority in the coming session. There is not a more critical topic in our state than the need to expand access to high-speed internet. The pandemic highlighted this need with the increased focus on telemedicine, online classes and folks working remotely from home. This is and will continue to be a top priority of the legislature.

Our partnership with the League of Municipalities couldn't be more important to the work we do and it is highly valued. I appreciate the work that Greg Cochran, his staff and all members of the League do each year to improve quality of life in our state. This partnership will continue to benefit our state and will continue to improve the effectiveness of the Legislature as we work to make Alabama a great place to live and work. ■

Scofield — continued from page 14

I am confident that we will enter the 2022 legislative session with the same eagerness we held this year, ready to hit the ground running and yield quality results for the people of Alabama. I would like to thank our Pro Tem Greg Reed for his efficient leadership and for the meaningful work that took place under his direction. I would also like to thank the League of Municipalities for bringing our attention and awareness to critical needs across our state. I look forward to working with the League as we continue to make our state a better place for all, and I am confident that Alabama's future is bright. ■

Singleton — continued from page 14

will not go away just because the Alabama Legislature has failed to act. They continue to snowball, and it is time to fix the healthcare problems in our state.

The continuing COVID-19 pandemic has exposed our rural broadband problems and the digital divide it creates like nothing before had. We are leaving our children behind when we are not supporting the infrastructure required to allow them to take classes from home when the situation necessitates it. During the past 18 months, we have seen expansions in the use of telemedicine, tele-meetings and home-schooling internet-based programming. However, unless everyone has access to this technology, we have failed as a state. Access to technology and high-speed broadband must be available for our citizens in Hale County, Dallas County, Macon County and the entire Black Belt, just as it is available in Jefferson County, Madison County, Montgomery County, Mobile County and Baldwin Counties. We cannot leave our rural residents unconnected.

The Legislature may be called in for a Special Session to deal with redistricting, which will impact the upcoming 2022 elections cycle. We must get these lines drawn correctly to ensure that people are being represented by elected officials who share their beliefs and concerns. We must not allow gerrymandering, packing or cracking to enter our process and illegally dilute our minority vote. Our state is stronger when people have confidence in their legislative leaders and the election process.

The upcoming legislative sessions promise to be interesting, with many issues to decide. Hopefully, in the end, we will move Alabama forward. ■

lives for the better with some form of mental treatment.

Similarly, the Legislature has made great improvements in rural access to high-speed broadband Internet, yet statistics continue to show that Alabama ranks 47th in the nation in connectivity, and 73 percent of the state's population cannot subscribe to an affordable broadband service. Passing the Connect Alabama Act into law earlier this year supplements the Legislature's previous efforts in this area and will begin to move those statistics in the right direction. It establishes the Alabama Digital Expansion Authority, which will keep pressure on the state to continue making progress; creates a division within the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs that will focus all of its efforts on securing and administering grants for broadband expansion; and forms a bonding authority that can provide financing for future efforts. Expanding broadband access will also play a role in what I hope will be another legislative priority – rural economic development.

For the past several years, our state has led the nation in economic development, and the closets at the Alabama Department of Commerce are filling with awards and shovels representing its job creation, industrial recruitment and economic expansion successes. At the same time, however, pockets of our state – represented most significantly by the Black Belt region – remain mired in high unemployment, underdeveloped infrastructure with little opportunity for citizens to succeed and move ahead. The Commerce agency has already created a position that focuses solely on rural community development and expansion, and the Legislature has begun an effort that will allow emerging businesses in rural areas to have easier access to capital, but we must continue building on the momentum and maintain this priority.

Those of us who live here understand that Alabama is a special place to live, work, worship and raise a family, but continuing to concentrate on the areas that I have outlined above will make this already special place even better for all who call it “home.” ■

Daniels

continued from page 15

Since some of our banks are beginning to step forward and do the right thing, it's high time for us to stand up and follow at every level of government.

Meanwhile, ARP funding continues to go a long way in assisting cities and communities across the state in a multitude of ways, but it won't last forever. In a few short years, those dollars will be exhausted or expire, which is why the legislature must begin planning today for long-term solutions to meet the financial challenges of tomorrow. A responsible gaming program can support necessary investments and help mitigate the potential for the type of cyclical budget crises that weigh heavily on our most vulnerable communities and municipalities. It's time to revisit the issue of expanding gaming with an emphasis on providing fairness and sustainable sources of funding for cities and towns across the state.

In looking to the future, it's also abundantly clear that Alabama cannot build its way out of a crisis of incarceration. The financial cost and human cost of building more prisons without considering criminal justice reform are simply unsustainable and downright unacceptable to families, communities and taxpayers. The legislature must take a stark look at the policies and practices that created and continue an overpopulated, under-resourced system before we pour billions more into it.

Lastly, we still have an opportunity to get it right on healthcare and we can do it by expanding Medicaid. The pandemic has shed a bright light on the way public health impacts economic health, especially in rural and urban communities. The ARP gives us another bite at the apple – another chance to provide vital health coverage to hundreds of thousands of Alabamians and realize nearly a billion dollars in federal incentives in the process. Furthermore, Alabama can and should take on the crisis of maternal mortality by extending postpartum coverage for eligible pregnant women who receive their health care benefits through Medicaid.

At the onset of the pandemic, the phrase “we're all in this together” was everywhere. Now, as we continue to recover and combat an evolving virus, unfortunately it seems like practically an afterthought. However, if this experience has taught us anything, it's that the challenges and obstacles facing the least of us impact us all. Our most vulnerable residents, our smallest and youngest businesses, our most financially distressed communities, all play a role in our overall success. And we all do better when they have the opportunity to reach their greatest potential. In 2022, the Legislature can return to Montgomery and do better for every Alabama family, community and municipality. It's our job, our duty and our obligation. ■

resolution creating the Alabama Pandemic Response and Preparedness Committee, a panel tasked with reviewing the state's past efforts to combat the pandemic and offering recommendations for future steps that should be taken. It is comprised of members from both legislative chambers and representatives from the Governor's Office, the Emergency Management Agency, the Public Health Department and other state entities. The group's report is due by the beginning of the session, and any proposed legislation or other necessary actions that result will certainly command our attention.

Also related to the COVID pandemic is more than \$4 billion that Alabama is receiving from the federal "American Rescue Plan Act," which provides roughly \$2.3 billion for state relief efforts, \$417 million for metropolitan cities, \$362 million for other municipalities, and \$951 million for counties. At least a portion of the money is governed by federal guidelines and is intended to be used for COVID mitigation and recovery efforts. Our budget chairman and the rest of our lawmakers will be mindful of allocating the funding in a manner that meets accompanying stipulations and, if you will allow the phraseology, provides our citizens with the best and most responsible "bang for the buck". The windfall follows on the heels of approximately \$1.7 billion in federal CARES Act funding that Alabama previously received in 2020.

Yet another COVID-related matter that will likely be addressed is rural healthcare access. Even before the pandemic, rural healthcare and the medical delivery system in the less developed areas of Alabama were already stressed. Hospital closures became frighteningly commonplace, and leaders in rural towns and counties were asking Montgomery to provide some form of help. Those stresses and strains have only worsened with the onset of COVID, especially in light of the fact that the state's lowest vaccination rates are occurring in rural areas, according to the Alabama Department of Public Health, so I believe the Legislature should take action.

Public education is always a spotlight issue when the Legislature meets, and it is time for us to have a frank discussion about where our students currently stand after a year of virtual education and prolonged breaks from the classroom environment. Even after in-school instruction resumed, the distractions from COVID concerns, masking requirements and outbreaks in schools in some areas made teaching and learning difficult. Without an honest assessment of where we stand in the current, COVID-created environment, Alabama runs a risk of graduating a generation of students who are not fully prepared to enter the workforce or proceed to higher education. How we

assess their progress and remediate the education they have lost could have a long-term impact on the futures of our students and the economy of our state.

Another factor that could impact our economy is the new Alabama Innovation Commission and Advisory Council. Known more commonly as "Innovate Alabama," the commission brings together private-sector experts and policymakers to develop policies that will create the more resilient, inclusive and robust economy that the 21st Century marketplace demands. Recommendations from the commission will touch upon areas like rural development, workforce training, job creation and industrial recruitment, and the Legislature will make every effort to follow the blueprint that is laid out for us.

Even at the worst points of the pandemic, Alabama's economic health ranked high among the states because the Legislature had already taken the steps to budget taxpayer dollars wisely, attract businesses and investments of all sizes and train our citizens to fill long-lasting, well-paying jobs. Because the fiscal climate and the global marketplace are constantly changing and developing, recommendations from the Innovation Commission will help us keep Alabama's economy growing, expanding and robust.

Earlier this year, I announced my decision to decline reelection and retire from the Alabama House, so, barring any unforeseen special sessions that might be necessary, the 2022 Regular Session will likely be my last as Speaker. Serving in the House as a representative, Rules Chairman and presiding officer has been among the greatest honors of my life, and public service has allowed me to give back to a state that has given so much to my family and me. Many of the issues that we were discussing when I was a freshman lawmaker in 2006 are issues that we are still dealing with today. As I close the book on my time in the Alabama House, it is my hope that the 2022 Regular Session can provide much-needed solutions to long-standing problems and allow the next Legislature to begin its quadrennium with a clean slate. ■

The first day of the 2022 Regular Session is Tuesday, January 11th. To register for the League's January 19th Annual Advocacy Day, visit almonline.org

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