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COUNTY COMMISSION

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MCKINNON
2017-18 ACCA President



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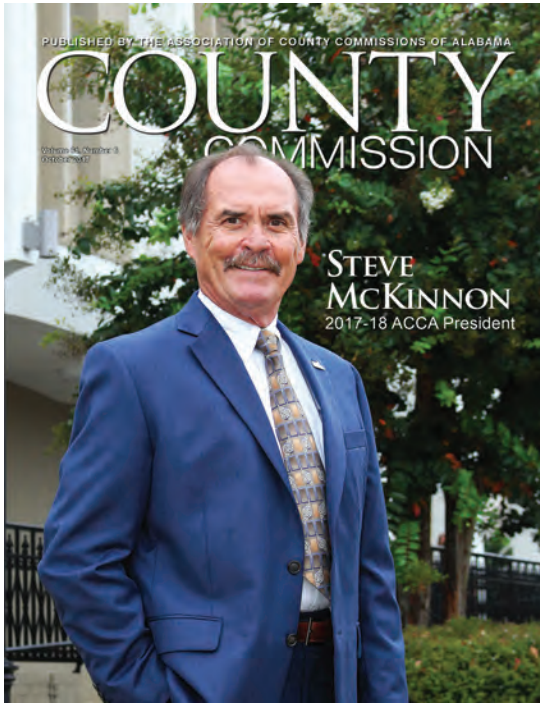


Photo: Nick Stakelum

ACCA President Steve McKinnon, pictured at the Dale County Courthouse, has pledged to do his part and called for members to focus on unity during 2017-18.

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President's PERSPECTIVE



Hon. Steve McKinnon
President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve McKinnon". The signature is fluid and cursive.

**To succeed,
we must become
laser-focused
on unity**

**'67 counties,
One voice' is
easy to say,
hard to do**

*Editor's Note:
This is the prepared
text of Steve McKinnon's
inaugural address.*

Good evening. As we conclude our Association's 89th Annual Convention, it is truly an honor for me to stand up tonight and discuss the next 12 months we'll travel together. The role of the president is to provide a roadmap for the membership, to be your spokesperson and to, perhaps, emphasize some details that could help this outstanding organization become even stronger. And that is exactly what I hope to accomplish.

Clearly, our Association is already on strong footing tonight and, clearly, I am not going to talk with you about major reforms in our organization or a significant change in direction. I am, however, going to spend a few minutes giving you my impressions of where we are and asking you to join me on a journey that may be just a little bit uncomfortable for some.

Over the last nine years, we've established a bit of a tradition. Each president sets a course for the Association, works hard to provide the leadership and vision necessary and – all the while – the smart guys around the state are working on some kind of nickname to characterize what has happened over those 12 months. It is one of those things that you wear as a badge of courage. But once you get to this point as the new president, and you stand up here alone, you sorta begin to worry about how you might be remembered.

Like today at lunch. I know that our executive director spent a great deal of time and thought on establishing the new nickname. And I watched Bill squirm as Sonny talked and then unveiled the new name that he will carry with him forever. And, I must say, it is still a little bit

uncomfortable for me to think about Bill Stricklend as a bunny rabbit!

Although, I do see the resemblance!

But he is not the only one whose name sticks with me. I certainly see Ricky Burney as a "King," don't you? And there's my friend Merceria Ludgood – it's really hard for me to see her now without thinking of a pioneer in a covered wagon. But, honestly, even though he has gained a reputation of being an all-star president, the vision of Ray Long as a slugger, waltzing toward the batter's box, squeezed into those tight baseball pants – well, that's not a pretty thought for any of us!

Seriously, I respect and admire all the past presidents of this Association – even those who were able to get away without an official nickname. Their continued service sets a standard for each and every one of us. And the fact that every past president in this Association remains on our Board of Directors while he or she is in office is just another thing that makes this organization special. I only hope that 12 months from now that all of them – and everyone in this room – will be satisfied that I've done my part to finish what has been started by those who led this organization before me.

The work we have before us is so important that I have found a way to keep Sonny and the staff focused and to allow each of you to work on the truly important things. You see, you won't have to waste any energy or be distracted this year, because I have already picked out my nickname. I like this nickname. It's the one I want. And I would like to tell you about it before we adjourn tonight.

I remember when Tim Cho-

ate of Etowah County – who lives some 200 miles from my home in Dale County – became known as the “Voice” of county government. It was that afternoon that I started to think about the possibility that I could offer myself in service to this organization. Because of his leadership in creating our new logo and image, all of us have embraced the phrase “67 counties, One voice.” The visual image of that capitol dome with the letters ACCA have come to symbolize a strong, collective effort to serve the citizens who depend on us.

67 counties. One voice.

It’s an easy phrase to utter, but I’m not sure that all of us understand the price that must be paid to meet the standard set by these words – 67 counties. One voice.

This Association has established its own course over the last five decades; moving from a small organization with little influence and small hopes to our status today

as the true leader in public policy and vision in our state. It is a fact. County government routinely sets the pace for our state’s economic growth and is at the heart of all major policy initiatives, and its support is now coveted by all those seeking to become leaders in Alabama.

We’ve forged partnerships with sheriffs and tax officials that have benefitted all groups and have strengthened the “unified” voice of county government. And, today, with the election of my neighbor, Henry County Probate Judge David Money, as vice president, I know that a stronger partnership with the probate judges is also within our reach. When that goal is achieved together, then we can truly say we have one unified voice in the courthouse.

But all news is not good tonight.

Everyone in this room was frustrated when our road and bridge program did not become law during this past session. I can tell you that

the day our bill reached the floor – but was not allowed to be voted on – was the most disappointing day of my public career. However, that outcome is not a measure of the efforts by many of you or of the dedication, ability and leadership displayed by our executive director and his staff. Because of our Association, counties were at the heart of the effort and each of us owe a debt of gratitude for their constant commitment and unwillingness to give up, even when things looked extremely dark.

In the end, however, we were all dismayed and confused at the final outcome. What was more troubling, in my opinion, was the evidence around Montgomery that county government was not completely unified in its support of this uniquely fair and much-needed initiative.

I certainly recognize that every person in this room could have provided a roadmap on how to put

continued on page 8

ACCA Salutes Commissioners Honored in 2017 for their Long and Faithful Service to County Government

• 40 YEARS •
 Hon. Hardy McCollum, Tuscaloosa County
 Hon. Bobby Miller, Tuscaloosa County (deceased)

• 32 YEARS •
 Hon. Dickson Farrior, Lowndes County

• 28 YEARS •
 Hon. Frank Burt Jr., Baldwin County
 Hon. Earl Gilmore, Barbour County
 Hon. Leonard Millender, Conecuh County

• 24 YEARS •
 Hon. Roy Moore, Dallas County
 Hon. Charlie Harris, Pike County
 Hon. Lindsey Allison, Shelby County

• 20 YEARS •
 Hon. John Adams, Bullock County
 Hon. Ricky Burney, Clay County
 Hon. Tom Grimsley, Coffee County
 Hon. Kimbrough Ballard, Dallas County
 Hon. Curtis Williams, Dallas County
 Hon. Miles Robinson, Macon County
 Hon. Dale Strong, Madison County
 Hon. Reginald Murray, Tuscaloosa County

• 16 YEARS •
 Hon. Henry Franklin, Barbour County
 Hon. Jesse McWilliams, Butler County
 Hon. Ryan Robertson, Cleburne County
 Hon. Fred Hamic, Geneva County
 Hon. Joe Hamilton Jr., Hale County
 Hon. Johnny Rogers, Lamar County
 Hon. Bill English, Lee County
 Hon. Elton Dean Sr., Montgomery County
 Hon. Albert Turner Jr., Perry County
 Hon. Cattie Epps, Russell County



Sonny Brasfield
Executive Director

Sonny Brasfield

If You Don't Go, You Won't Know

Clearly Conveying County Wishes to Outsiders

Years ago, when I was a young man getting started in the business of advocacy and promotion of county government, one of my favorite commissioners stood during a district meeting and said something that has stuck with me since.

At the time, he was talking about the Association's education program for county commissioners, which was brand new, and some folks weren't sure it was necessary. He was passionate about the program and believed his colleagues needed to attend the classes and learn more about the "real" story of managing, protecting and expanding the services counties provide to their residents.

What he said was catchy and, honestly, the kind of thing you'd hear people say when standing around an old country store or outside the courthouse on a Wednesday afternoon. Folks laughed the first time he spoke, but as time passed – and he repeated the phrase to make different points on different subjects – others began to borrow his insightful comment.

His phrase roared back to me a few weeks ago when someone outside county government questioned the Association's efforts to advocate for the protection and improvement of county government in Alabama.

"If you don't go, you won't know," is what former Chambers County Commissioner Ross Dunn said that night nearly 30 years ago.

That night, he was talking about those not going to the educational classes – those who thought they already knew everything they needed to know. And his point, of course, was that if those "know-it-all"

commissioners did not attend the classes, they would have no idea what was going on.

If you don't go, you won't know.

And that short line sums up the response county government had to someone outside its ranks who decided she should second-guess the way those "inside" sought to protect its ability to provide services at the local level. You see, she has never served or been a part of county government – or any other level of government, for that matter – so most of those who do serve at the local level had just one question: "How on earth could she have any idea what's best for counties?"

Repeating the details of the issue that gave rise to her attack on the Association isn't important because the facts were distorted and twisted in an effort to discourage counties, county officials and county employees from their mission. But learning from the criticism is important, Ross Dunn would tell us. Because if we "don't go" then we "won't know."

Some outside county government are unconcerned when there are efforts to shift state programs to the local level or to reduce state funding for services, believing counties will pick up the pieces. Such moves do not solve problems nor do they help issues vanish into thin air. The problems continue to grow; this shifting of costs only shifts the debate to another level of government.

And it is the citizens who lose.

This Association's role is to make the decision-makers acutely aware of that reality. Counties cannot stand by and watch as responsibilities are passed down to the local level – not because counties

are disinterested in serving the public but because counties do not have unlimited revenue.

Every new program or new responsibility – even if that responsibility is cloaked in the

distractive language of being “permissive” – passed down to the local level causes commissioners to abandon or reduce funding for some existing service. And somehow, that fact is often lost on those

who “don’t go” to the courthouse very often, if at all.

So, as a new legislative session nears, the Association has begun work on the 2018 Alabama County Platform. In early October, more than 50 county commissioners from all over the state spent two days

in Montgomery for the inaugural meeting of the revamped ACCA Legislative Committee. A panel of commissioners has opened dialogue with members of the House Black Caucus so that the best interests of

Counties cannot stand by and watch as responsibilities are passed down to the local level – not because counties are disinterested in serving the public but because counties do not have unlimited revenue.

counties can be clearly and collectively considered before votes are taken in the Alabama State House.

As you read this, the Association staff is traveling across the state to hold district meetings so that the membership can have direct input into the positions and issues that will

be given priority. Then, next month, our affiliate groups will gather to pour over the language in the Platform and to dissect important and complicated issues so that the Association’s positions can be concise, effective and unified.

The Legislative Committee and the Board of Directors will have another cut at making changes in late November, and then, that Platform will be put before the full membership during our Legislative Conference in Florence just before Christmas.

This process is necessary so that the Association’s objectives and guiding principles can reflect the wishes of the members and, just as importantly, be clear to those outside of county government.

Those principles, and our actions on behalf of the citizens who depend on county government, are easy to understand and to predict. Unless, of course, you don’t know. ■

Congratulations to Commissioners completing Education Programs in 2017

Alabama Local Government Training Institute: A Partnership of ACCA & Auburn University’s Government & Economic Development Institute

LEVEL II

Hon. Fred Wilson, Calhoun County
Hon. Ricky Burney, Clay County
Hon. Terry Hendrix, Cleburne County
Hon. Larry Nickles, Dallas County

LEVEL I

Hon. Larry Mack Stoudemire, Autauga County
Hon. John Thrailkill, Autauga County
Hon. Mike Painter, Blount County
Hon. Nicholas Washburn, Blount County
Hon. Don Larkins, Bullock County
Hon. John McGowan, Bullock County
Hon. Sam Bradford, Chambers County
Hon. Douglas Jones, Chambers County
Hon. Jimmie Hardee, Chilton County
Hon. Steve Langston, Chilton County
Hon. Matthew Mims, Chilton County

Hon. Greg Denney, Clay County
Hon. Donald Harris, Clay County
Hon. Bennie Morrison, Clay County
Hon. Tommy Barnes, Colbert County
Hon. David Campbell, Conecuh County
Hon. William Kyle Adams, Covington County
Hon. Tony Holmes, Covington County
Hon. Chris Carroll, Dale County
Hon. Frankie Wilson, Dale County
Hon. Valerie Price Reubin, Dallas County
Hon. Scot Westbrook, DeKalb County
Hon. Cecil Mack Daugherty, Elmore County
Hon. Bart Mercer, Elmore County
Hon. Johnny Grant Etowah, County
Hon. Shane Hughes, Fayette County
Hon. Todd Brannon, Geneva County
Hon. Melinda Gilbert, Jackson County
Hon. Mike Sisk, Jackson County
Hon. Kevin King, Lamar County

Hon. Jeff Long, Lamar County
Hon. Oliver Bradley Holmes, Lauderdale County
Hon. Joshua Simmons, Lowndes County
Hon. Craig Hill, Madison County
Hon. Jason Windham, Marengo County
Hon. Isaiah Sankey, Montgomery County
Hon. Ronda M. Walker, Montgomery County
Hon. William Randy Dillard, Pickens County
Hon. Derek Farr, Randolph County
Hon. Jeff Burrough, Walker County
Hon. Ralph Williams, Walker County
Hon. Brad Johnston, Washington County



continued from page 5

together a road and bridge program if he or she had been working alone. Likewise, everyone could have provided their own thoughts on how the money should be divided, the right amount of new taxes that should be levied and what roads should be given priority. In the end, however, success in this kind of battle lies in identifying your leaders, trusting their judgment and then pulling your weight for the common good. That's what Tim Choate meant when he said we must have one voice. And this past session, there were some who didn't understand that we can succeed only if we are all pulling together.

One single county or 10 counties or even 20 or 30 or 40 are guaranteed to fail unless the remaining counties join together to provide that unified, undivided, single voice. Influencing public policy in Alabama is not the job of our staff alone. In fact, it is their role to move this Association into a place of leadership and respect – and then it is our place to close the deal. It is our responsibility to use our individual influences, relationships and political skill to achieve our collective goals. And it is our job to pull in one direction, with one voice.

This past session, one single commissioner – who said the right thing to the right person at the right time – could have led to the passage of the ATRIP-2 Program. Things were that close, and we were that close to success on the House floor that day. Standing before you tonight, I wonder if everyone did everything they could've done. What if I came out there right now and sat across from each of you, looked you in the eye and asked, "Did you do everything you could've done?" If I did that, I wonder – would your answer be "Yes, I did all I could" or would you look away?

Because not only could one person have led to our collective success,

but also one person – who goes off on his or her own – well, that one person can do more damage than any of us can imagine.

I remember a few years ago when our 9-1-1 directors gained national attention for pulling together and enacting a statewide program to fund 9-1-1 activities with a single statewide fee. I remember that a whole lot of blood, sweat and tears – and give and take – went into that legislation. But in the end, the 9-1-1 community pulled in one direction. And the result was a new law that most people had thought was impossible. The same can be said for the passage – and voter approval – of the Amendment 4 powers we discussed earlier, or the passage of the self-governance authority, or the omnibus pay bill enacted years ago, or the establishment of a new property insurance program or even the collective effort that has been necessary to move every county toward the successful completion of the \$1.2 billion ATRIP Program. All of those achievements were possible because every single person did his or her part, while at the same time being willing to compromise and accept what is best for the full membership.

If we are to succeed on the difficult roads that lie ahead of us – passage of ATRIP-2, a stronger local voice on the state retirement system board, reform of our juvenile justice system and updating our state's workers' compensation laws, among other things – we must become laser-focused on unity. It is important that we address problems "in house" and before they become public. We cannot give our opponents a way to divide county against county or commissioner against sheriff or tax official. I truly believe that any public policy issue can be resolved, in a positive way, if **true** leaders will provide **true** leadership. Tonight, I challenge each of you to be a **true** leader in this Association. I

challenge you to resist those who encourage you to be a voice of division and dissent. Be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

Yesterday, I sat with pride and listened to the discussion about leadership in courthouses all over this state. And, like most of you, I wiped away tears when Commissioner Peavy talked about his passion for serving as a foster parent. The new members of our leadership "PLAN" group are setting a standard for all of us to use as a goal. In the coming year, I hope you will search your soul, find your passion and get busy being a true leader in your community.

Some of you may not know this, but I was originally appointed to the county commission by Gov. Bob Riley. I have never forgotten the challenge he laid in front of me when he called to tell me that I was being appointed. He said that he was not appointing me to go to meetings at the courthouse. He told me that I was being appointed so that I could be involved, join the Association, work with my colleagues all over the state and go about being a part of a common solution. He told me to accomplish something – not to simply sit in a chair at a commission meeting. And I took him seriously. Ever since I received that call, I have tried to fulfill the commitment I made to him, to the voters in Dale County and to each of you.

As we start our year together, I am here tonight to deliver the same message to you. If you plan to just sit in your chair this year, if you plan to do nothing, if you plan to sit by and watch all of your colleagues dedicate themselves to something truly inspiring, then I ask you to please just sit their quietly. Yes, I am asking that if you cannot join us actively, then please just sit there quietly and let those of us who want to get some-

thing done do **all** the talking and **all** the work.

I am a businessman, and I have been involved in associations all my life. But from the first day I walked in the door of the Association of County Commissions of Alabama, I knew that this organization was different – very different from any other group I have been a part of. The staff, the membership, the board, the folks who work at the county level and serve the Association – they have a special kind of dedication and commitment that is unlike any I have ever seen. This organization is special, and we have opportunities in front of us that the commissioners who established the Association way back in 1929 could have only imagined. I encourage you to rely on the staff and its ability to provide research, leadership, insight and educational excellence.

I want to applaud everyone for supporting the amendment to our

by-laws during today's business meeting. I believe the enlargement of the legislative committee will be a sea change in our effectiveness. Each county now has its own voice, its own representative and its own legislative leader. The question to the 67 of you who now serve on this committee is whether you will fulfill your responsibilities. Will you focus your energy and influence, and will you speak with a unified voice? Or will you choose to sit in your chair and say nothing? We need you, and tonight I ask that you join us.

If you join us – and the others in this room who share our desires – then you will make a difference. When things get tough this year and we need one last push, perhaps one of you sitting here tonight will be the **one** person who needs to talk to the **one** person who can push us over the top.

If you will join me and if we pull together, then next year, when I sit over there in the seat that's occupied

tonight by the bunny rabbit, I can be pleased with the small role I will have played as your president.

Now, when I started, I said I already have my own nickname. And I do.

You see, the folks who have come ahead of me have set the table, they have put in motion all the elements we need to succeed. The slugger and the bunny rabbit and all the others, they have gotten us all the way to the 9th inning, and they have given us a lead. Now, it's my job to finish the deal.

I promise you that I am ready to come out of the bullpen. My arm is loose, and my curve ball is nasty! I am asking that each of you pick up your baseball cap, put on your glove, run out to your position on the field and get ready to play ball. **As the closer from the bullpen**, I will do my part – but I need you behind me doing yours. Together, we'll get those final 3 outs and finish off those who stand in our way. ■



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Newly-enlarged Legislative Committee established for 2017-18

The voice of county government in Alabama is growing stronger and more unified thanks to a recent revision of Association by-laws.

During the ACCA Annual Convention in August, member counties voted overwhelmingly in favor of enlarging the organization's Legislative Committee.

The result is a 67-member committee, epitomizing "67 Counties, One Voice," with each and every county in the state represented. The change went into effect immediately, with the group's inaugural face-to-face meeting taking place in Montgomery the first week of October.

"This is a very important endeavor," said Marshall County Commissioner Bill Strickland. "The rearrangement of this Legislative Committee came after many years of talking this over."

By virtue of his position as immediate past president, Strickland chairs the Legislative Committee, whose members serve one-year terms.

The ACCA Board of Directors put forward the proposed by-laws change in July, allowing for proper notice in advance of the Business Session on Aug. 24.

In the past, the committee was composed of 12 commissioners elected from districts plus past Association presidents.

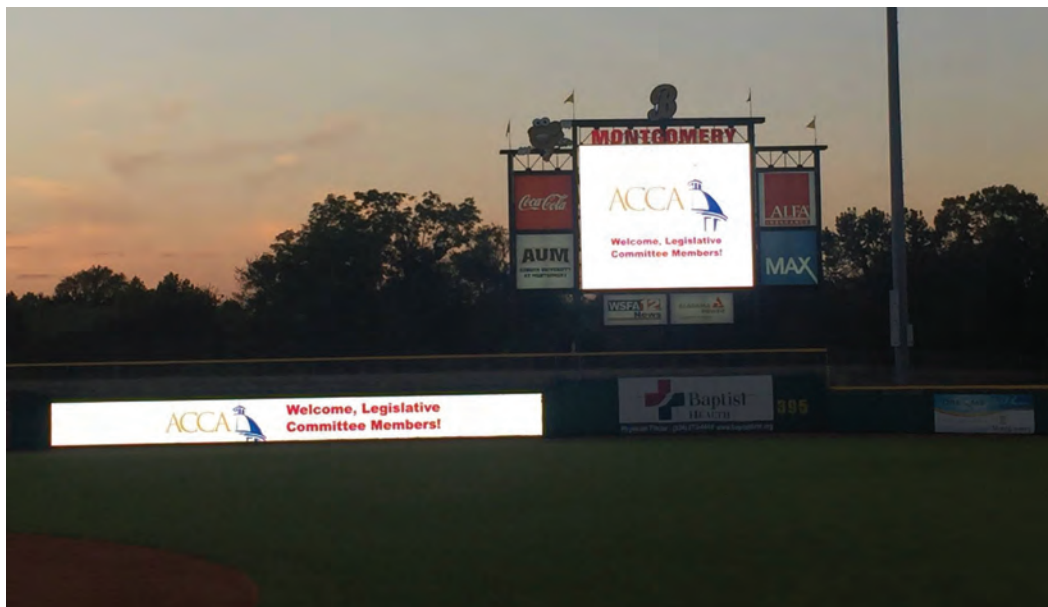
"The more we've got working on this the stronger we are," said ACCA President Steve McKinnon, who serves on the Dale County Commission. "Every county made a commitment."



2017-18 ACCA Legislative Committee

"This committee shall have responsibility of representing the Association in all legislative matters and shall support legislation endorsed by the Association or Board of Directors. The committee shall receive and review all legislative proposals and policies and refer, with comment, these proposals and policies to the Board of Directors." – ACCA By-Laws

→ **67 Counties, One Voice** ←



When your meeting is focused on "getting in the game," then Riverwalk Stadium – home of minor league baseball's Montgomery Biscuits – is the perfect place for dinner.

The change comes at a critical time in the legislative cycle. All 140 seats in the Alabama Legislature are up for election in 2018. Candidates could begin raising money in June, and legislative turnover is expected to be significant based on the number of incumbents who have announced that they are not seeking re-election.

Since 2018 is an election year, the Legislature's annual Regular Session gets an early start. Lawmakers will reconvene at the Statehouse on January 9.

The new committee has an active fall schedule so that members can collect input on needed legislation from every county, review and recommend changes to the Alabama County Platform, analyze the situation on pressing issues and meet with key legislators.

In this pre-session phase, members are also responsible for taking information back to their fellow commissioners and staff leaders so that they can engage on issues impacting counties, a role that increases once the session begins.

As Executive Director Sonny Brasfield told committee members, "This core group of 67 will be the group, along with the Board of Directors, that we will reach to and lean on during the session to help us make sure that we protect, improve and enhance county government here in Alabama. You'll be educating yourself, and you will be the eyes and ears of the Association back at the local level." ■



Rep. Donnie Chesteen addressed the 67-member Legislative Committee about next steps for improving rural broadband throughout the state.

For more on ACCA's legislative preparations, see page 14

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- Kenneth Holmes, CCRO, Montgomery County
- Robbie Dickerson, CCRO, Walker County

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- Bart Blackmon, CECA, Houston County
- Holly Britain, CECA, Houston County
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- Steven Webb, CECA, Jefferson County
- Eric Linsley, CECA, Mobile County
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- Emma Bolton, ACPS, Colbert County
- Denise Kucera, ACPS, Baldwin County

Alabama Certified Risk Management Specialist

- Cynthia Anderson, ACRMS, Mobile County
- Wendy Swann, ACRMS, Lee County
- Michele Willis, ACRMS, Jackson County

Getting in the Legislative Game

With encouragement to “get in the game!” still ringing in their ears, county officials rolled right into legislative preparations this fall, making the “pre-session” months as active as baseball’s preseason.

“One of the most important jobs we do as county commissioners is to get involved in these legislative issues,” said Marshall County Commissioner Bill Strickland.

As immediate past president, Strickland chairs ACCA’s newly expanded Legislative Committee, which has sparked intense interest in every aspect of getting ready. The 2018 Regular Session begins January 9.

As Executive Director Sonny Brasfield told committee members, “We believe that this is going to be a gamechanger for us.”

There is now a commissioner from every county serving on the committee, rather than members being elected from a dozen districts. During this pre-session phase, the group plays a critical role in the process by which input from hundreds of county leaders around the state develops into a unified voice.

With the myriad interconnections between state and county government, stakes are always high when the Alabama Legislature is at work. Top issues in 2018 are projected to include juvenile justice reform, governance of the employee retirement system, rural broadband, abatements and exemptions of local taxes and Medicaid reimbursement rates for inmate healthcare.

Legislative Committee members tackled these and other issues during a two-day workshop in early October, and they also conducted a thorough review of the Alabama County



Credit © Glenn Nager | Dreamstime

Legislative Program Development Schedule leading into the 2018 Regular Session

September 25	Minority Issues Steering Committee Meeting, Montgomery
October 4-5	ACCA Legislative Committee Pre-Session Workshop, Montgomery
October 10-30	District Meetings, Abbeville, Evergreen, Decatur, Ashville, Alexander City and Tuscaloosa
October 31- November 16	Affiliate Group Legislative Committee Meetings, Montgomery. (Administrators, Engineers, Emergency Managers, 9-1-1 Districts and Revenue Officers)
November 29	ACCA Legislative Committee Final Review Webinar
December 6	ACCA Board of Directors Meeting, Florence. Alabama County Platform and 2018 Priorities approved.
<i>December 6-7</i>	<i>ACCA Legislative Conference, Florence.</i>
<i>January 9, 2018</i>	<i>First Day of the 2018 Regular Session, Montgomery</i>

Platform, recommending revisions and flagging priorities for the Board of Directors.

Protecting, promoting and enhancing county government through the legislative process demands an all-out team effort from commissioners and county employees. The series of District Meetings in October provided an ideal forum to lay out the game plan and identify key contributions that can be made by every team member.

“District Meetings this year were exciting – a little less talk about issues and a little more talk about how to get involved and how to attack this issue of influencing this new kind of legislator that we have,” Brasfield said.

The first half of November is devoted to meetings of affiliate group legislative committees, with separate sessions for administrators, 9-1-1 staff leaders, revenue officers, engineers and emergency managers. Then in late November, the ACCA Legislative Committee will make a final review of input from affiliate groups and the Minority Issues Steering Committee.

All of this activity is building toward the ACCA Legislative Conference in early December, when the Board of Directors sets legislative priorities for the coming year and approves the platform, sending it on to a vote of the full Association membership. ■

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2017 Safety Awards

Category 1

1. Henry County
2. Clay County
3. Coosa County

Category 2

1. Pickens County
2. Randolph County
3. Coffee County

Category 3

1. Lauderdale County
2. Limestone County
3. Houston County

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Leadership with Staying Power

This year ACCA presented its highest honor, the Outstanding Contribution to County Government Award to Roger Hayes, chairman of the Winston County Commission.

Each year the Awards Committee goes to great lengths to surprise the honoree and build suspense for everyone in attendance at the Annual Convention, and Committee Chair Laura Cobb continued the tradition.

She began by outlining the basic requirements – making significant contributions of time, talent and energy to better county government in Alabama. And then she raised the bar.

“The award is given not to those who simply serve well in a position but instead to those who go beyond the call of duty and strive to make a difference for all 67 counties,” she said. “I can speak for everyone on the awards committee when I say it was a sincere pleasure to have the opportunity to recognize such an achievement.”

Then the specifics began to emerge, as Executive Director Sonny Brasfield described a few highlights from this commissioner’s term as ACCA president. Alabama voters approved a constitutional ban on unfunded mandates. They redirected a share of the Alabama Trust Fund’s earnings to counties, so that offshore oil and gas would benefit every corner of the state.

Then there were the legislative accomplishments. For about a century, counties had needed the state Legislature’s approval to increase commissioner salaries, but the “Omnibus Pay Bill” passed that year, making it a local decision during the annual budget process. Legislation also passed to enable the

County Joint Bid Program, saving time and money through cooperative purchasing. Another bill made it legal for counties to accept credit cards as a form of payment, and not to be overlooked is the program that replaced 600 county bridges.

among the most faithful, dedicated, and dependable people that I have ever met in my life.”

When Hayes’ name was finally announced, applause thundered through the hotel ballroom. Once quiet was restored, Hayes



Winston County Chairman Roger Hayes, right, accepts the Association’s highest honor, the Outstanding Contribution to County Government Award, from 2016-17 President Bill Strickland.



“In one year, we did all of those things together that now benefit counties by millions of dollars,” Brasfield said. “But bills you pass aren’t the measure of one person. It’s everybody pulling together, but you do have to lean on a president who leads you through a year like that.”

Though nearly two decades have passed since these achievements, Brasfield said the honoree’s commitment has not wavered. “Eighteen years later, he is still

expressed his appreciation “I just thank everybody. I’m just glad to be a commissioner and be part of it,” he said praising staff and officials in Winston County before commending Brasfield and the assembled county family. “We’ve got a great leader, and y’all are great leaders just continuing to do the work.” ■

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‘Forever One of Us’

Art Faulkner, standing on right with 2016-17 President Bill Strickland, may have retired from the public sector after nearly 30 years in emergency services, but ACCA is not really letting him leave. ACCA named him an honorary county commissioner and presented a plaque that reads, in part, “You will forever be one of us.”

Executive Director Sonny Brasfield spoke of Faulkner’s extraordinary loyalty and especially his remarkable leadership in the aftermath of the April 2011 tornadoes, while he was director of the Alabama Emergency Management Agency. Faulkner also received the Association’s highest honor, the Outstanding Contribution to County Government Award, in 2012.

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An Economic Development Win in Rural Alabama



2016-17 ACCA President Bill Stricklend (center) congratulates the award-winning team from Lawrence County. From left: Engineer Winston Sitton, Administrator Heather Dyar, Commissioner Joey Hargrove, Stricklend, Commissioners Bobby Burch and Norman Pool, and Solid Waste Director Willie Allen.

For 2017, the Lawrence County Commission took home ACCA's Excellence in County Government Award in the Rural Category for an outside-the-box strategy that yielded 40 new full-time jobs for a struggling, unincorporated community.

In a nutshell, the county commission secured a \$25,000 grant and formed a coalition with the local school system and a nearby municipality to convert a dormant high school cafeteria into a commissary that now cooks up some 3,000 meals a day.

"It was truly a team effort from many within the county, proof good things happen when we all pull the rope in the same direction," said Commissioner Bobby Burch.

The annual Excellence in County Government Awards recognize innovative and effective programs

initiated or completed during the previous year and implemented by the commission itself and not its agencies or boards. Lawrence County

won in the category for counties with populations less than 50,000.

In June of this year, Valley Inc. celebrated the grand opening of its



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Lawrence County location. From this site, the company prepares hot and frozen meals that are delivered to senior centers, colleges and hospitals across the region. Clients include the Alabama Department of Senior Services, and the Mississippi-based company has a total of six commissaries scattered around the state.

The success story really began back in 2015. Valley Inc., looking to relocate to a larger facility, contacted Burch for assistance. Morale in Lawrence County had been running low for a couple of years after International Paper, the county's largest employer, ceased operations in Courtland.

Finding a new location for Valley Inc. was proving difficult, in part because the company was too small for the county's industrial park. But Burch had an idea.

The day he met company representatives at a shuttered high

school in southeastern part of the county it had been about a decade since savory cooking smells wafted out of the old cafeteria. Speake High School and the Bobcats had been the heart of the community, but local



students now attended a larger high school down the road.

Valley Inc. thought the site had potential with good road access for the company's delivery routes. In the end, the Lawrence County School Board leased the dormant campus at "virtually no cost."

The county had eliminated all discretionary spending from its budget, and so turned to a grant to get the project going. It funded minor improvements to the property (demo'd old awnings and sheds, painted the exterior, upgraded field lines, added parking and a loading dock). The City of Moulton lent assistance with sewage improvements.

Valley Inc. invested approximately \$750,000 for renovations, expansion and equipment.

"Although the impact from the loss of International Paper will always have a lingering effect within Lawrence County and North Alabama, something like Valley Food Services Inc. choosing a small farming community helps alleviate the loss," Burch said. "Now, more than 3,000 seniors from Lawrence County and the surrounding 14 counties are receiving nutritious food on a daily basis all because the county pulled together." ■

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Planning to Succeed in Coffee County

Coffee County's systematic and forward-thinking approach to a widespread challenge earned special recognition and an opportunity to share "lessons learned" with county leaders from around the state at ACCA's 89th Annual Convention.

The featured project was the "Coffee County Capital Improvement Plan: 2017-2037," which earned the 2017 Excellence in Urban County Government Award.

The annual Excellence in County Government Awards recognize innovative and effective programs initiated or completed during the previous year and implemented by the commission itself and not its agencies or boards. Coffee County won in the category for counties with populations more than 50,000.

At the convention, Engineer Randy Tindell presented Coffee County's plan during a General Session, starting with some attention-getting questions, such as: "Do you know exactly how many buildings that you, as a commissioner, are responsible for?"

Neither did we, he said. "The Coffee County Commission recognized that many of the county-



Coffee County representatives on-hand to accept the 2017 Excellence in Urban County Government Award from 2016-17 ACCA President Bill Stricklend (fourth from left) were: (from left) Buildings Superintendent Todd Rugg; Administrator Rod Morgan; Commissioner Jimmy Jones; Stricklend; Commissioners Tom Grimsley, Dean Smith and Frank Britt; Engineer Randy Tindell and Commissioner Kim Ellis.

owned buildings were aging and that its facilities program was focused on reacting to problems rather than proactively addressing its needs," explained the awards entry. "As a result, buildings were slipping into disrepair."

Guided by a belief that "failing to plan is a plan to fail," in early 2015 the commission tasked Tindell, Administrator Rod Morgan and Building Superintendent Todd Rugg with a four-step charge. They were to come back with an inventory of all county buildings, a needs assessment, a capital plan and a long-range funding plan.

The commission did not want this to be a one-time exercise, so

the long-range funding was a high priority. If you know the courthouse roof is expected to last another 15 years, then you know that in about 15 years you will need the money to pay for a new roof.

Coffee County's funding solution had multiple components.

- Energy conservation projects were selected that would pay for themselves in cost savings.
- Because of record-low interest rates, money has been borrowed to fund some urgent projects, including expanding the jail and sheriff's office.
- A Capital Improvement Fund Account was established to cover anticipated projects in the next

20 years and to build a reserve. The reserve is intended to build up so the county could eventually cash-flow the next 20-year cycle of capital improvements.

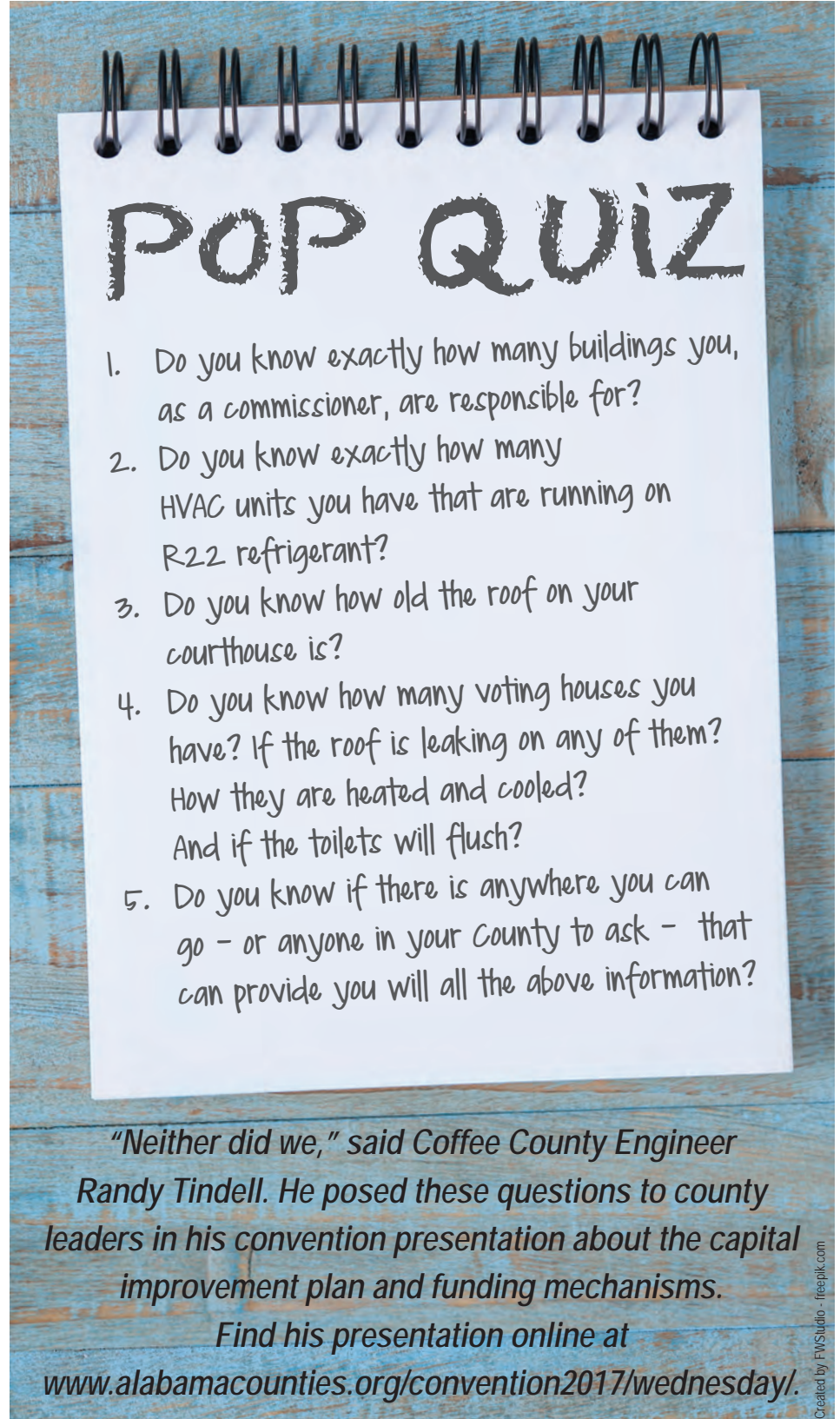
This fund receives cash savings from reduced energy costs as well as annual contributions from the General Fund, Sheriff and Jail Fund, Highway and Engineering Fund and Environmental Services Fund.

Commissioners considered at least nine drafts before approving the final version last fall, and they don't have to search too hard to find evidence of its impact. Money is being saved every day with more than 2,000 new, energy efficient LED light fixtures plus upgraded HVAC systems and a digital phone system. About 40,000 square feet of space has been built or renovated, not to mention 18 roof projects.

These projects and dozens more are all tracked in a database of the 52 county-owned buildings, and cost

estimates for future projects are catalogued there too.

Coffee County is justifiably proud of these achievements. As the entry form stated, "The commission is taking care of its buildings in such a way that problems are averted, making for a much better working environment for the county employees as well as members of the public that use the facilities." ■



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In Profile: ACCA Vice President David Money

Staff leaders all over the Henry County Courthouse are already on notice: David Money's work will be taking him out of the office much more often in the next three years.

The probate judge and commission chairman has just been elected vice president of the Association of County Commissions of Alabama. According to the traditional officer rotation, he will be sworn in as ACCA president in August 2019.

To get there, local voters will have to grant him a second, six-year term of office in 2018. At age 69, Money has reason for optimism, especially since the very same voters just approved a local constitutional amendment that allows him to run again. In most cases, an Alabama judge cannot take office after his 70th birthday, but Henry County extended the limit to age 72.

The extension is fortunate, because Money feels like he has unfinished business. "In my mind, I would be a failure if we didn't do something to help county roads and get some people to work," he said.

Henry County has moved forward in other areas, such as a completely

rewritten personnel manual and an award-winning safety record. When he took office in 2013, the rivalry between Abbeville and Headland had spread well beyond high school athletics. These days you are far more likely to find collaboration between the county seat and biggest municipality.



Get to Know...

Hon. David Money, ACCA Vice President
Probate Judge & Commission Chairman, Henry County

Public Service: Abbeville City Council, 1976-84; Mayor, 1984-88.

Henry County Probate Judge/Commission Chairman since 2013.

Professional Background: Retired after 40 years as Ford dealer.

Got his start washing cars for \$100/week.

Education: Graduate of the University of Alabama. Level II Certificate, Alabama Local Government Training Institute

Greatest Blessings: Salvation & Karen, his wife of 45 years. Together they have four children and eight grandchildren.

Recreation: Traveling to visit grandchildren, following the Crimson Tide and New York Yankees, reading nonfiction (usually about sports or Alabama politics).

ACCA Engagement: Currently serving on the Workers' Compensation Self-Insurers' Fund governing board and Legislative Committee. County representative to the Alabama Juvenile Justice Task Force. Previously served two terms on ACCA Board of Directors.



Twitter @JudgeDMoney72



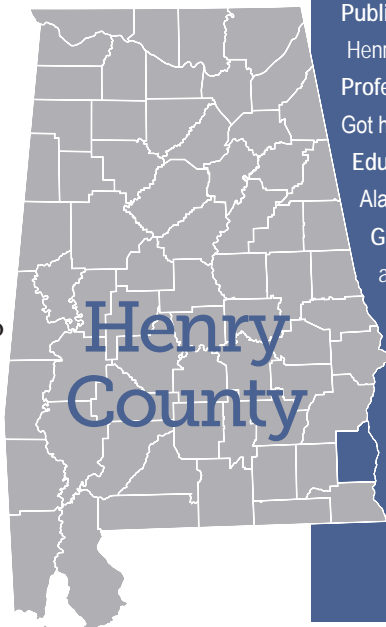
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As an ACCA officer, Money said he intends to do everything he can to continue to strengthen unity among counties, noting that the expanded, 67-member Legislative Committee is an important step in that direction. Nowhere is the importance of unity more clear than in the ongoing quest to increase funding for local roads and bridges.

He predicted that at some point in the future, perhaps in 2019, counties will have another transportation funding proposal to consider. When that time comes, “what we cannot afford to do is look at it and say ‘Is this the best for my county?’,” Money said. “We will never have a piece of legislation that everybody’s going to say ‘That’s the best thing we could hope for.’”

Instead, the goal needs to be the best piece of legislation that has a chance of becoming law. “I don’t care how we write it, if it can’t pass we are wasting our time,” he said.

Money also expressed interest in reaching out to counties that could get more benefit from Association services. As the first probate judge/ chairman in many years to serve as an ACCA officer, he also wants to enhance the positive relationship with the probate judge’s organization.

“There is a feeling among some that the Alabama Probate Judges Association and ACCA have a completely adversarial relationship, and that’s not true,” Money observed.

As an organization, ACCA has real strengths to draw on, in the areas of leadership, commitment and hard work, he said. “I refer to Sonny (Brasfield, executive director) as the Nick Saban of county government,”

Money said with a chuckle. “He can be polarizing. Some people love him and some people don’t love him so much. But I know one thing, you

want him on your side rather than against you.”

Over the years, it is ACCA’s strong points that have motivated him to take

on greater responsibility, he said. A line that Jack Nicholson delivered to Helen Hunt in “As Good as It Gets” helped him find just the right words to explain.

“Being around Sonny Brasfield, members of that board, fellow commissioners and the staff that’s been assembled,” he said, “it makes me want to be a better public servant.” ■

“Being around Sonny Brasfield, members of that board, fellow commissioners and the staff that’s been assembled,” he said, “it makes me want to be a better public servant.”

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GET IN THE GAME

Online Convention Resources

ACCA's 89th Annual Convention was jam-packed with "use now" information to help you protect, promote and enhance your county government. Need to track down a presentation or handout to share with colleagues? Find it at www.alabamacounties.org/convention2017

The screenshot shows the ACCA website header with the logo and the slogan "67 Counties, One Voice". The navigation menu includes: HOME, CONTACT, Print, EVENTS, EDUCATION, AFFILIATES, PUBLICATIONS, RESOURCES, COUNTY NEWS BLOG, Search, and SEARCH. The main content area features the heading "Digital Convention | Get in the Game" and the sub-heading "The 2017 Annual Convention is going digital!". Below this, it states: "Pack your tablets, smartphones, and laptops because the ACCA 89th Annual Convention is going digital. This year, convention materials will be made available so that you may access them in real time. Follow along with speaker presentations, search for materials, view handouts, and interact with attendees and staff- all from your fingertips!". A "CATEGORY NAVIGATION" sidebar on the right lists Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

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Voices from the County Courthouse

Convention-goers have said for years that the informal conversations are one of the most valuable parts of spending a few days with their counterparts from around the state.

“Have you ever run into something like this?”

“How do you handle it when?”

That was the inspiration behind the inaugural Voices from the County Courthouse session at ACCA's 89th Annual Convention, which paired “boots on the ground” county government experts with award-winning NPR National Correspondent Debbie Elliott.

Because it's one thing to know the law says you can't pave a driveway. It's another thing entirely to know how to tell your cousin you won't help with his muddy, uneven, nightmare of a driveway.



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What's special about leaders who are “in the game”?

After interviewing countless elected officials at all levels of government, NPR National Correspondent Debbie Elliott said the distinctions are clear. “There are the politicians, who are just looking out for themselves and how they can use whatever situation to their advantage, and then there are what I see as statesmen and stateswomen, public servants who want to make government work and work better.”

After a disaster, communities led by public servants tend to recover more quickly, she said. More often than not, these elected officials share some important characteristics:

1. “They have an intimate and passionate sense of place about where they are from.”

2. They know the other people she will need to interview.
3. “And then they are engaged, and they try to pull you in.”

Leaders inspire others and have the courage to make the right decision even when that is more difficult, said Pike County Administrator Harry Sanders. “We’ve got a lot more to do than we’ve got resources to get it done. I’m sure nobody else here has that problem,” he said. “You really have to be willing to take some punches and some misunderstanding

from the public. That’s not easy. I’ve seen people take that and still go on and do a good job.”



Shelby County Commissioner Lindsey Allison (seated on right) emphasized “relationships, relationships, relationships,” and Washington County Commission Chairman Allen Bailey praised the power of unexpected partnerships.

Constant Change

“You’ve got to be willing to change,” said Commissioner Lindsey Allison from fast-growing Shelby County. “At least in our county, you’ve got to understand that nothing is constant. Every day you get new challenges, and you’ve got to be open to that.”

Allison has been a commissioner for 25 years, and fewer than a dozen commissioners in office in Alabama today have served longer. She is the senior-most female county commissioner in the state, but for all that seniority it sounds as though she works her district as hard as if she were just getting established. “I’m continually trying to keep my ear to the ground,” she said. “Networking. Relationships, relationships, relationships.”

Dealing with Unhappy Citizens

Counties are at “ground zero” in this national epidemic of dissatisfaction with government, Allison said, so the pressure is on. “You’ve got to show that government works,” she said.

“Trust me, we get yelled at. I bet y’all do too,” Allison said, triggering sympathetic laughter from the audience.

“What I really have tried to do is be very positive with people and say, ‘I know you have a problem. I know we need to address this problem. We may not have the answer to your problem, but I’ll get you to the person who can’ – and not leave them standing there in anger.”

Saying “no” to a constituent does not have to end on a sour note, advised Choctaw County Commissioner Tony Cherry. “You just have to be truthful with people and hear their concerns, and the main thing is to follow up with people. I believe in going back and telling them what the results are. If it’s not favorable, then that’s just what it is. Just be upfront and honest,” he said.

If that doesn’t get the job done, sometimes you have to be even more direct. “I get a lot of questions like ‘well, we used to do this’ or ‘we used to do that.’ I’m sorry; I’m not,” said Cherry, ACCA’s president-elect. “My philosophy is I’m not going to jail for anybody.”

“Most of the time, people just want to be heard”

“Trust me, we get yelled at. I bet y’all do too”

Chairman Mark Culver, who has served the people of Houston County for more than

30 years, said there’s no way

commissioners can make everybody happy. He knows. He tried.

So many commissioners entered public service to make a difference their communities, and they tend to be very action-oriented. From that viewpoint, it can be easy to overlook that listening is, in fact, an action step.

“Most of the time, people just want to be heard,” Culver said. “They want to vent, tell you their story.”

More Common Ground than Expected

Citizens often think their situation is unique, that no one has ever had a particular problem before, Culver said, and county leaders can fall into the same trap.

“We have problems that are not unique to Washington County,” said Chairman Allen Bailey. “Everybody has basically the same problems.”

Leverage Every Resource

Counties are known for finding a way forward when others see only obstacles. “You have to leverage every resource you possibly can,”

said Bailey, a 23-year commission veteran. “With partnerships, we’ve done things that would have never happened if we had relied only on our local county resources.”

As an example, he pointed to a railroad overpass that was constructed as a joint effort by the county, the railroad and a local industry. “There was a community of people behind this crossing, and when trains were switching they couldn’t



The importance of communication was a persistent theme in the second panel’s discussion. From left: NPR National Correspondent Debbie Elliott; Houston County Commission Chairman Mark Culver; George Grabryan, director of EMA and 9-1-1 in Lauderdale County; and Choctaw County Commissioner Tony Cherry.

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get out,” Bailey said. “It was a long way around.” In this case, leveraging every resource including leaning on the industry’s political clout.

Leverage Every (Human) Resource

George Grabryan wears two hats for local government, as director of a pair of agencies – 9-1-1 and emergency management – shared by two jurisdictions. If you are looking for the top staff person at Florence-Lauderdale 911 or Florence-Lauderdale County EMA, he’s the man.

“We’ve always had a volunteer component with the operations we have in the county,” Grabryan said. “We even have a workers’ comp policy that covers them while they are volunteering for us, and that helps eliminate a lot of potential liability.”

And there’s plenty of work to



Butler County Commissioner Joey Peavy brought along his friend Layla, a child in foster care, to help him encourage county officials to be part of solving “real life” problems in their communities.

go around. “They come to us as interns from the (University of North Alabama); they come to us as people who may see a little blurb in the news and they want to participate,” he said. “We have engineers; we have doctors – just every walk of life.”

Outside the Lines

In some ways, this idea of leveraging every resource – no matter whose it is – represents a major shift.

“For many, many, many years, we all thought we were little kingdoms, and those kingdoms did not cross,” said Culver, elected commission chairman by

County Revenue Officers Association of Alabama Awards 2017

Outstanding Contribution to CROAA

Terri Henderson, CRE
MONTGOMERY COUNTY



County Revenue Officer of the Year

Jerry Green
BALDWIN COUNTY



• CROAA is an affiliate of the Association of County Commissions of Alabama •

voters county-wide. “Dothan was Dothan, and Houston County was Houston County. We didn’t want to do anything with Henry County or Geneva County or any of the towns.”

These days, Wiregrass leaders team up constantly, magnifying the impact of each jurisdiction’s limited resources. “Matter of fact, our road and bridge department just won an award for a project we did in conjunction with Dale County. We did most of the work, and the project’s actually in Dale County,” Culver said. “We would have never thought of doing that 15 years ago, ever, but we’ve opened our minds now.”

New jobs in Dale County translate into increased consumer spending in Houston County.

“Those lines that are on the map are just that — on the map”

“Those lines that are on the map are just that – on the map,” Culver said. “You need to bring your neighbors in and work together.”

Don’t Get Boxed In

Sure, the county governing body’s legal authority is limited, but communities need all their leaders “in the game,” helping to convene and connect residents.

Commissioner Joey Peavy in Butler County has found his passion as an advocate for children in foster care who encourages more families to get involved. The state says Alabama has about 5,000 children in foster care, and it is an issue that touches every single one of the 67 counties.

As Peavy spoke to his county

colleagues, he was joined on stage by Layla, a young girl in foster care. As smiles – and maybe a few tears – rippled across the crowded meeting room, the commissioner said, “She’s no different than any child in this state or country. They just need an opportunity.

“That’s real life, and that’s what we, as commissioners, need to be part of.” ■

“That’s real life, and that’s what we, as commissioners, need to be part of.”

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Prison Reform Progress Report

e Can Stock Photo / Alamy

Officials from the Alabama Department of Corrections and the Alabama Board of Pardons and Paroles provided a progress report on reform implementation to county officials at the ACCA Annual Convention in August.

In short, it is working.

“Our inmate population is going down, and it’s going down very significantly,” said Corrections Commissioner Jeff Dunn. “In fact, Alabama is experiencing the largest percentage decrease in their inmate population of any state in the nation.”

With offenders who are not housed at a DOC facility but are still subject to supervision, there are positive trends as well, said Meredith Barnes, chief legal counsel at the Board of Pardons and Paroles. Technical violations are down, and “we’ve seen a decrease in the revocation rate on both the parole and probation front, very significant on the parole front,” she said. “That’s a good thing because it is impacting positively the Department of Corrections’ prison population.”

Alabama legislators passed the sweeping Justice Reinvestment Act in 2015. Often referred to simply as “prison reform,” the law has had significant impacts on both the

Alabama Board of Pardons and Paroles and county jail operations. Counties have been particularly affected by changes to community corrections and new utilization

The 2015 reforms were driven in large part by increasingly intense budget pressure on the state’s General Fund coupled with the possibility that subpar conditions



Alabama Department of Corrections Commissioner Jeff Dunn, left, and Meredith Barnes, chief legal counsel for the Alabama Board of Pardons and Paroles, updated county leaders on the future of Alabama’s prisons.

of county jails for intermediate sanctions – called “dips” and “dunks” – for probation and parole violators.

There is no doubt it is good news when a prison system that has ranked among the most overcrowded in the nation can report fewer inmates. In five years, overall inmate population is down about 4,500 individuals, which works out to a 30-point decline in overcrowding, Dunn said.

could lead to federal takeover of the state’s system. Timing was critical because, as Dunn pointed out, in the last decade or so there is a new wealth of information about effective strategies and programs. Where reform was once about good or promising ideas, now consideration is reserved for evidence-based and data-driven policies.

In his remarks, Dunn put a great deal of emphasis on enhanced

rehabilitation services within the state prison system as a tool to reduce recidivism. Education programs today include GEDs, vocational certificates and Second Chance Pell Grants that allow offenders to take courses for college credit.

“The goal here is to give inmates an opportunity – some tools in their toolkit – so when they go out into society after leaving us they don’t come back,” said Dunn, who has been on the job since April 2015. “That’s the whole goal: that they can be productive and successful citizens.”

Inmates are also training to contribute to their communities inside prison walls. Graduates of the seminary program at one men’s facility will serve in ministry and counseling roles. Another program began this year to train women

as doulas so they can support incarcerated expectant moms.

Through the course of Dunn’s presentation, there was little mention of one long-standing county priority: the timely transfer of state inmates out of county jails and into state facilities. According to DOC’s July 2017 statistical report, the total population of state inmates in county jails was 2,169. Within that group, 125 were awaiting transfer from a county jail to a state facility. A little less than half of those individuals had been awaiting transfer for more than 30 days.

Probationers and parolees can be subject to a pair of new disciplinary sanctions, the “dips” and “dunks.” A dip is a two- or three-day stay in a county jail. In more serious cases, a dunk is up to 45 days of confinement that begins

in a county jail before the offender is transferred to a state facility.

“The use of dips over this last year has increased significantly throughout the state,” Barnes said. “We actually piloted the dip policy in a certain few locations, and now we’ve rolled it out statewide and we are seeing it increase as officers become more comfortable using that.”

Barnes did note that with dips and dunks, the 2015 law gave sheriffs the ability to refuse admittance in situations where the offender has a serious medical condition, the offender poses a security risk or the jail is at, near or over capacity.

As can be expected with comprehensive reforms, implementation continues more than two years after Alabama’s Justice Reinvestment Act became law. In 2017, Pardons and Paroles has been heavily involved in getting an expanded victim notification system fully operational.

By design, there are fewer lower-level offenders inside the state’s prisons. “The composition of our population is changing, and we need to change with it,” Dunn said.


The construction question is unanswered, with deteriorating buildings running at 167 percent of designed capacity. Debate over prison facilities – which ones to close, where and how to build new ones – has oftentimes overshadowed bigger issues, he said, naming staffing as the agency’s No. 1 challenge.

Beyond 2015’s reforms, DOC is also working to address a recent federal judge’s finding that inmate mental healthcare is inadequate.

However, there is evidence of positive momentum, and Dunn said he is “more optimistic than ever before” because of Gov. Kay Ivey’s leadership. All appropriate options are on the table, she says, describing it as an Alabama problem that needs an Alabama solution.

Taking all these factors together, more changes are coming. We’ve go to “prepare ourselves for our future, and that’s bigger than whether we have new buildings or not.” ■

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FAMILY ALBUM



Photos from Alabama Counties



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You can't "Get in the Game" if you don't know the players! County leaders were honored to welcome Gov. Kay Ivey to ACCA's 89th Annual Convention, where she was first batter up in the Opening General Session. Photo Jamie Martin/Governor's Office

In September, the Baldwin County community proved to be expert in hurricanes and hospitality, much to the appreciation of Floridians evacuating in advance of Hurricane Irma. Chairman Chris Elliott (pictured) and fellow commissioners opened a temporary shelter in the Baldwin County Coliseum in Robertsdale. The facility, rated to withstand a category 5 hurricane, welcomed a total of 441 people.



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Please send your photos to ACCA for the Family Album!

County Commission magazine wants to publish a selection of member photos in every issue to showcase the many ways county government touches the lives of Alabamians and to recognize the dedicated men and women who make counties work. Please send photos (large file sizes preferred) to Jeannie Gaines, ACCA Public Relations Manager, jgaines@alabamacounties.org.

FAMILY ALBUM



Photos from Alabama Counties



A highlight of the annual Golf Bash is always the steak luncheon, with every bite of meat grilled to perfection by executive chef Roger Hayes and his assistants. From left, Commissioner Randy Vest and Chairman Ray Long (Morgan), ACCA Public Relations Manager Jeannie Gaines and Chairman Hayes (Winston).



Beautiful Timberline Golf Club in Calera was filled with smiling golfers all day long, including the team from Alabama Asphalt Pavement Association.



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Passion + Accountability combined for a powerful seminar for members of PLAN 2018, a leadership program for second-term commissioners. During the ACCA Convention, PLAN 2018 members developed their “Get in the Game” strategy, based on each member finalizing a Passion Project that address a need in his or her home county. During the September seminar in Tallapoosa County, the 21 participants mapped their action steps for the next 12 months.



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Alabama Commissioners United

Gratitude is extended to everyone who helped make the 26th Annual County Golf Bash such a success. County commissioners and friends gathered Sept. 20 at the beautiful Timberline Golf Club in Shelby County in recognition of the Association's efforts to improve county government in Alabama. More than 50 tournament sponsors supported the event this year, and special appreciation is extended to the hard-working Golf Bash Committee. Committee members included commissioners *Debbie Wood (Chambers)*, *Phil Riddick (Madison)*, *Jeff Clark (Morgan)*; Chairman *Mark Culver (Houston)*, Chairman/Probate Judge *Hardy McCollum (Tuscaloosa)*, and county engineers *John Mark Davis (Autauga)*, *Matt Murphy (Barbour)*, *Dennis McCall (Butler)*, *Brian Rosenbalm (Calhoun)*, *Josh Harvill (Chambers)*, *Benjie Sanders (Crenshaw)*; *Derek Brewer (Dale)*, *Richie Beyer (Elmore)*, *Bill Bridges (Escambia)*, *Tim Graves (Etowah)*, *David Palmer (Franklin)*, *Chris Champion (Henry)*, *Cal Markert (Jefferson)*, *Mike Shaw (Marion)*, *Dan Dahlke (St. Clair)*, *Randy Cole (Shelby)* and *Anthony Crear (Sumter)*.

Minority Issues Steering Committee

Congratulations to the newly-appointed members of the 2017-18 ACCA Minority Issues Steering Committee! Your service to "67 counties, One Voice" is greatly appreciated.

Committee Chairman *Marcus Campbell (Sumter)* appointed three commissioners to one-year terms: *Allin Whittle (Butler)*, *Tyrone Moye (Clarke)* and *George Bowman (Jefferson)*. He also appointed three commissioners to two-year terms: *Jimmy Jones (Coffee)*, *Leonard Millender (Conecuh)* and *Ricky Burney (Clay)*.

ACCA President *Steve McKinnon (Dale)* appointed three commissioners to one-year terms: *Bertha Kelly (Coosa)*, *Curtis Harvey (Houston)* and *Homer Wright (Pike)*. He also appointed three commissioners to two-year terms: *Ronald Smith (Bullock)*, *Michael Williams (Greene)* and *Merceria Ludgood (Mobile)*.

CROAA

The County Revenue Officers Association of Alabama (CROAA) is pleased to announce the new board of directors for 2017-18: President *Kim Creech (Baldwin)*, Vice President *Terisa Lang (Madison)*, Secretary/Treasurer *Mike Stuardi (Mobile)*, Immediate Past President *Jayne Pearce (Tuscaloosa)* and district representatives *Kevin Caputo (Madison)*, *Chris King (Cullman)*, *Charles Bell (Jefferson)*, *Kirk Keith (Tuscaloosa)*, *Butch Burbage (Shelby)*, *William Friend (Russell)*, *Twyla Jackson (Montgomery)*, *Jerry Greene (Baldwin)* and *Carl McDowell (Mobile)*.

In other business, *Terri Henderson (Montgomery)* is representing ACCA and CROAA on the Wholesale and Distributor Reporting Advisory Group. The panel, created by the Alabama Retail Accountability Act, includes participation from state government, local government, industry and retail.

Mark your calendar! The CROAA Legislative Committee meets Nov. 6 at ACCA headquarters in Montgomery.

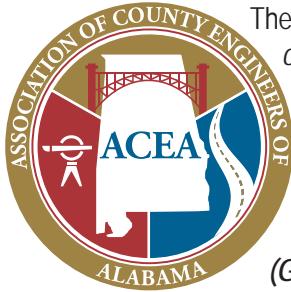
ACAA

The Association of County Administrators of Alabama (ACAA) has been busy through the late summer and into the fall. To enhance the organization's brand, a new logo was rolled out at the ACCA Annual Convention in August. President *Mary Wood (Clay)* represented administrators at the ACCA Board Seminar in September. Administrators have also been a vital part of implementing the new Medicaid for inmates program, collecting data on juvenile detention bed rates to inform the work of a legislatively-created task force and ensuring that the 2018 ACCA Membership Directory contains the most up-to-date information on all 67 counties.



Mark your calendar! The ACAA Legislative Committee meets Nov. 15 at ACCA headquarters in Montgomery.

ACEA



The Association of County Engineers of Alabama (ACEA) is pleased to announce its newly-elected board of directors for 2017-18: President **Josh Harvill (Chambers)**, Vice President **DeAndrae Kimbrough (Perry)**, and Secretary **Justin Barfield (Geneva)**; with area representatives **Eric Hill (Lauderdale)**, **John Lang (Cullman)**,

Luke Porter (Fayette), **Dustin Stewart (Blount)**, **Scott Anders (Tuscaloosa)**, **Bryan Kegley (Mobile)**, **Matt Murphy (Barbour)**, **John Mark Davis (Autauga)** and **Jeremy Butler (Clay)**; as well as **Josh McDougald (Butler)**, the representative of nonvoting members. Officers and area representatives serve one-year terms. Past presidents join them on the board of directors.

In addition, **Harvill** represented engineers at the ACCA Board Seminar in September, and the next round of training for motor grader operators began in October.

As an organization, ACEA has taken steps to strengthen communication. A new logo was launched in August, and a new website went live in September. Take a look at www.alabamacountyengineers.org! Special thanks are extended to the Website Committee: **Houston Matthews (Madison)**, **Josh McDougald (Butler)**, **Daniel Lundy (Chambers)** and **Luke McGinty (Elmore)**.



Mark your calendar! The ACEA Legislative Committee meets Nov. 16 at ACCA headquarters in Montgomery.

AAND

The Alabama Association of 9-1-1 Districts (AAND) is pleased to announce its newly-elected board of directors for 2017-18: President **Johnny Hart (Marshall)**, Vice President **Gordon Sandlin (Cullman)**, Secretary-Treasurer **Holly Britain (Houston)** and district representatives **Tim Webb (Winston)**, **Ernie Blair (Madison)**, **Howard Summerford (Jefferson)**, **Rod Coleman (Tuscaloosa)**, **Victor Kennedy (Talladega)**, **Donnie Smith (Chambers)**, **Becky Neugent (Clarke)** and **Larry Daniels (Dale)**. Officers and district representatives serve one-year terms. They are joined on the board by AAND past presidents.

Mark your calendar! The AAND Legislative Committee meets Oct. 31 at ACCA headquarters in Montgomery.

AAEM

Amid the many activities and initiatives that are ongoing, the Alabama Association of Emergency Managers (AAEM) made time to present a special recognition during the ACCA Annual Convention. During the breakout session specifically for emergency managers, members heard a presentation called "Voices from the Field: A Career 'in the Game'" from Art Faulkner, who recently retired after serving as director of the Alabama Emergency Management Agency. But Faulkner did not leave empty-handed, as county emergency managers presented him with a plaque that read, "With deep appreciation for your partnership and support of the Alabama Association of Emergency Managers while serving as director of the Alabama Emergency Management Agency."



Mark your calendar! The AAEM Legislative Committee meets Nov. 3 at ACCA headquarters in Montgomery.

County Joint Bid Program

It's been a particularly busy time of year for the County Joint Bid Program, which is continuing to help counties save time and money on a range of goods and services.



- Regardless of what tropical storm is churning in the Atlantic, all 67 counties have access contracts in place for disaster debris removal and removal monitoring. The 2015-2016 pre-need contracts for these services have been renewed and are now in effect through Oct. 31, 2018.
- Bids have been opened and are being reviewed for 2018 items in the categories of heavy equipment, road signs, herbicides and corrugated metal pipe. There are typically many price increases from year to year, and current prices for these items are good through Dec. 31, 2017.

Find out more!

www.alabamacounties.org/joint-bid-program or Chase Cobb (334-263-7594 // ccobb@alabamacounties.org)

COUNTY FAMILY FEATURE



Longest-serving Commissioner Gets Ahead of the Game

Yes, he is currently Alabama's longest-serving county commissioner.

Yes, he is probate judge and chairman, a once widespread combination of duties that today is only found in a dozen other Alabama counties.

And yes, he served as Association president in another century, taking the helm in 1995.

But it would be a mistake to cast Hardy McCollum as a throwback to another era. If people think economic development has only become a priority for commissioners of the "new millennium," they need to meet him. He's been focused on jobs for Tuscaloosa County for more than 40 years.

When McCollum was first elected in 1976, the county was having to borrow money to make payroll. A paper mill – the county's second largest employer – had just closed, and a pipe foundry, another major employer, was on its last legs.

"Inherit that sort of thing, and you better be looking to job creation," said McCollum, who was born and raised in Tuscaloosa. "When I graduated from the university, I had to look outside of my community for a job because there weren't any real opportunities. At that point in time, as hokey as it may sound, I was committed that if I could ever do anything about it, I would."

So, he traveled the world with industrial recruiting teams, helping to land the first foreign company in the mid-1980s. It was 1993 when Mercedes-Benz announced it would open a plant in Vance.

"I'm very proud of the accomplishments we've had as a community with bringing the likes of Nucor Steel, Mercedes and JVC," McCollum said. "I can go on and on about the transformation within our community, and the impact some of those decisions have had on the entire state of Alabama."

Today auto manufacturing employs 40,000 in Alabama, up from just a few thousand before Mercedes-Benz. This fall the company announced another billion-dollar investment in the state, including a global logistics hub to be located in Bibb County.

The state's reputation shines quite a bit brighter after the economic development of the last quarter century, and McCollum has



Judge Hardy McCollum served as the 1995-96 ACCA president.



observed growing respect for county commissioners.

"I've said many times that the general public's perception is that county government is nothing more than the pothole in the road in front of their house, and county government is much, much, much more than that," he said. "I think the Association has helped change a lot of that perception."

He got involved – and has stayed involved – with ACCA for a simple reason: he wanted to do a better job.

"For me, the Association has been very much a part of allowing me to fulfill my responsibilities, not only from an education standpoint, but the relationships you're able to develop," he said. "Folks in these other counties have tackled some of the same issues, and you picked up the phone

and 99.9 percent of the time they were able to willingly share their wisdom."

Over the years, ACCA has grown both in unity and in member services, ranging from insurance coverage to joint bidding to education programs to name a few.

"For me, the Association has been very much a part of allowing me to fulfill my responsibilities, not only from an education standpoint, but the relationships you're able to develop"

"I've seen the Association when it was working counterproductive because of factions within the organization, and now I have seen it as we have unified and brought the affiliate groups into the fold. We all

seem to be pulling more in the same direction today," he said, giving credit to commissioners who have served as board members and officers as well as to the executive directors during this time, Buddy Sharpless and Sonny Brasfield.

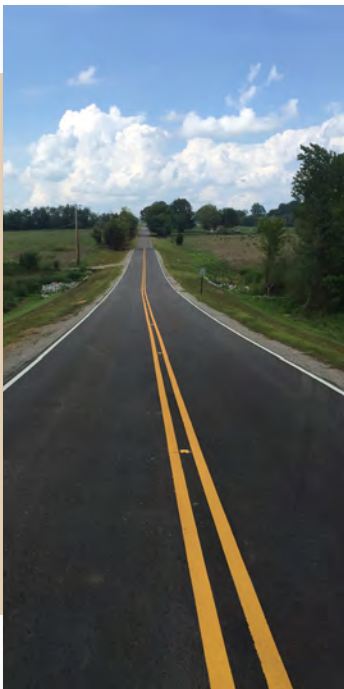
The general rule says Alabama judges cannot begin a new term of office after their 70th birthdays, so McCollum cannot seek reelection next year. These days he'd rather discuss any number of topics other than what he will do at term's end.

Whoever succeeds him will inherit a surging economy, a growing population and a community that has accomplished so much of the hard work to recover from the devastating 2011 tornadoes. However, "don't put me out to pasture," he said. "I've got a lot to get done." ■



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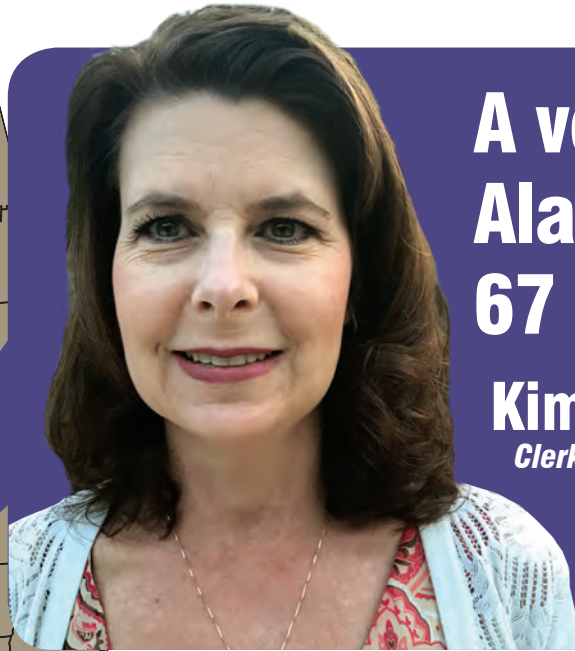
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NRM-10021AL (4/2016)



A voice from Alabama's 67 counties

Kim Creech, CRE

*Clerk/Treasurer, Baldwin County
President, County Revenue Officers Association of Alabama (CROAA)*

Q The Alabama Legislature reconvenes January 9, and counties are sure to battle another avalanche of proposed tax exemptions. How do CROAA members help the "One Voice" protect county revenues?

A As an organization, we actively monitor new bills or amendments that propose tax exemptions. Individual CROAA members calculate the potential effects of proposed bills to their jurisdiction, and we are then able to contact elected officials with concerns and suggestions as "One Voice."

Q How is the shift to an increasingly digital economy affecting the day-to-day work of county revenue officers and license inspectors?

A It presents both benefits and challenges for revenue officers and license inspectors. Benefits include the availability of electronic records and the wealth of information regarding businesses and business owners that is available on the internet. Some of the challenges that we currently face arise due to the dated laws and regulations that have not evolved

at the same pace as the changes in technology. Examples include digital downloads and cloud-based software.

Q Alabama's Simplified Sellers Use Tax remittance has gotten significant positive attention on the national stage. How has its successful implementation affected the work of county revenue officers?

ALABAMA GUARDRAIL, INC.

Catherine Huff

President / Owner

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A Because the businesses who participate in the program have met the requirements set forth by the State of Alabama, county revenue officers are able to focus on the compliance of businesses that are not enrolled in the program. I believe most Alabama counties have benefited from the Simplified Sellers Use Tax Remittance Act. The majority of the revenue that has resulted from the program is “new money” – meaning it is paid by businesses who have not previously remitted tax to Alabama taxing jurisdictions.

Q What advantages are there for local governments as new reporting requirements are being implemented for nonprofits?

A The new requirements will encourage the completeness

and accuracy of records, and will help to prevent purchases that do not qualify for exemption. The yearly reporting and renewal requirements will also ensure that nonprofits whose activities have changed will not continue to be considered exempt.

Q CROAA had its first meeting with Alabama’s new revenue commissioner during the ACCA convention. What is needed to maintain and enhance the positive working relationship between counties and the state?

A Collaboration and information-sharing are critical. To improve communication and support for CROAA members, it might be worthwhile to identify a liaison within the department so we have “go-to” person.

Q What are the biggest benefits of CROAA membership?

A The biggest benefits of CROAA membership are the professional network that exists among local government officials and employees, as well as the ability to exchange ideas regarding all matters of collections and enforcement of county revenue.

Q What priority projects or initiatives are on the horizon for CROAA?

A The ACCA staff has asked us to serve as subject-matter experts who can make suggestions for updating and improving Alabama’s business license and sales tax laws, and we are glad to assist in any way we can on these important issues.

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Q What is the value of CROAA membership for a county that doesn't self-collect?

A CROAA provides valuable education to elected officials and staff members regarding laws and rules that are applicable to their county. Members of CROAA are also notified of new bills or amendments that could potentially affect their county's revenue.

Q What does "67 counties, One voice" mean to you?

A The ACCA is a great organization that hears all counties' needs. As "ONE Voice," we can work together on important topics and share goals moving forward. Alabama counties can accomplish so much more as a team than any county could individually. ■



SPEED DRILL with Kim Creech

Favorite college football team: *Auburn* | **Cats or dogs?**

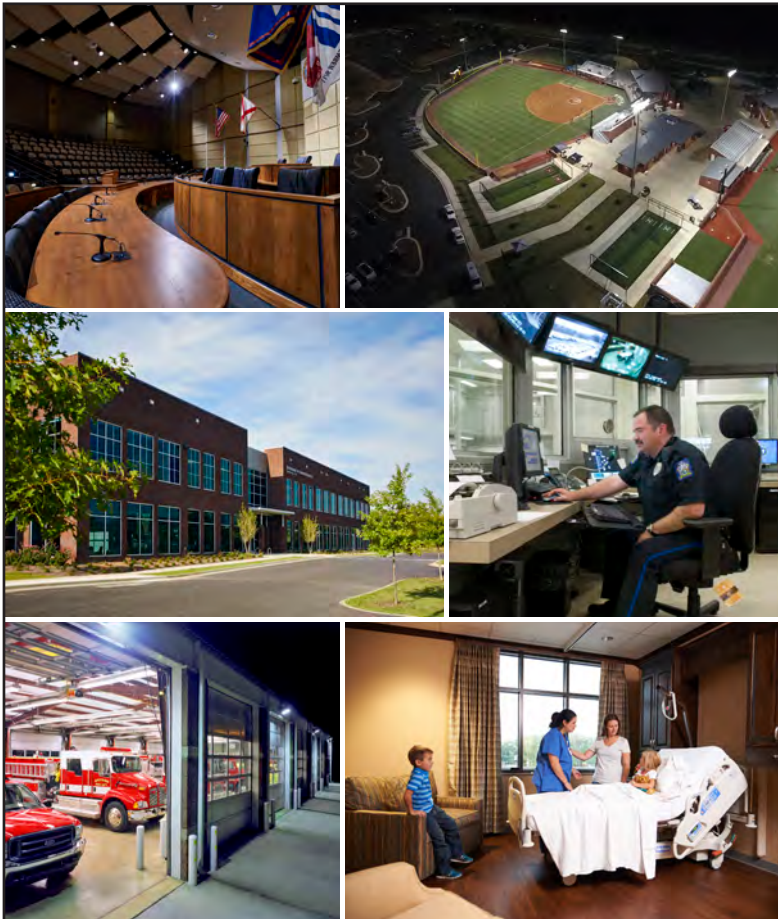
Dogs | **Favorite holiday:** *4th of July* | **First paying job?**

Concession stand worker at a local skating rink | **Dine in or**

eat out? ? | **As a child, I wanted to be** _____ **when I grew**

up. *a Teacher.* | **Best Halloween candy?** *Caramel Apples* |

If I won the lottery, I would *buy a condo at the beach.* ■



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