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# COUNTY COMMISSION

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*Annual Legislative Issue*



**2017  
Regular Session**





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VOLUME 61, NUMBER 1



**House Speaker Mac McCutcheon, elected to his post in 2016, will preside over his first Regular Session of the Alabama Legislature in 2017.**

PHOTO: Dionne Whetstone, Alabama House of Representatives



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# President's PERSPECTIVE



Hon. Bill Strickland  
President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bill Strickland'.

## Communicating with Purpose

**Ability to effectively  
communicate an idea  
is almost as important  
as the idea itself**

**"A** lie gets half around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on." That was the observation of Winston Churchill, one of history's most gifted communicators and recognizable political figures. Last legislative session, it often felt like county leaders and the other stakeholders that supported new road and bridge investments spent more time separating fact from fiction than talking about the actual benefits of the proposed legislation. But from that, we learned a valuable lesson: the ability to effectively communicate an idea is almost as important as the idea itself.

Since the December announcement of the Association's 3-cent bond issue proposal, many county commissioners and engineers have worked overtime to ensure people know the truth about this proposal that, if passed, would catapult counties decades ahead in their infrastructure planning and re-energize economic development across the state. Those efforts are clearly evident through the dozens of newspaper editorials and television features on the benefits of the county bond proposal. From Morgan to Houston, from Sumter to Chambers – Alabama's county governments are speaking in ONE Voice.

I want to commend those counties that have been proactive in starting a public conversation about this critically important initiative. I am excited to see these efforts continue over the next few weeks, as county leaders have pledged to further promote the bond issue by holding community meetings – either in person or via Facebook

– to ensure the right people know the right facts about the proposed 3-cent bond issue.

In addition, county governments are also pushing this session for at least 10 other legislative changes that would greatly improve our ability to govern at the local level. But no matter how good our ideas are, they mean nothing if we do not communicate them to the right audience. In this instance, our audience is both state legislators and the people we serve at home.

This legislative session we have a number of communication tools – some old, some new – to help us achieve this goal. And really, there is no reason that any legislator – or citizen, for that matter – should ever be able to say "I haven't heard from my county leaders about this."

Our Association has provided us with four important communication tools to use this legislative session (outlined in more detail throughout the pages of this magazine issue):

### Legislative Reports and Tracking Charts

The Association staff will provide the membership with weekly email updates on what is happening at the Statehouse. Those emails – known as The Goat Hill Reports – will be emailed on Monday, Wednesday and Friday of each week. Take a moment to read them, and pay close attention to the red "take action" buttons.

### Phone Application

If you have not already downloaded the ACCA67 phone application, please do so. But do not stop there. Make sure

your county employees have also downloaded it, and are using it to stay engaged with all the wonderful things happening within Alabama's county governments.

## County Days

There is power in numbers. As in past years, county leaders will have six opportunities to join their colleagues across the state for a day of advocacy at the Statehouse. Schedule a 10-minute meeting with your local legislators a week or so before your scheduled County Day.

## The Association Staff

I sincerely believe that our Association staff is the very best in the state. Make sure staff members are aware of the grassroots efforts occurring in your county and how

your local legislators are responding to county issues. They are at the Statehouse every day of the session counting votes. We need to be counting votes right along with them.

So as we track the actions of the Legislature for the next 15 weeks, I want to issue a two-part challenge to my colleagues across the state.

First, I want to urge county leaders to utilize each of the four resources highlighted above between now and the end of the legislative session.

I also want to challenge the Association membership to not only use these tools, but to step outside of your comfort zones with how you communicate – both internally and externally. For many of us, the idea of downloading a phone application or having a town hall meeting on

Facebook is beyond foreign. But in 2017, this is where we find ourselves.

With each passing year, the communication media will change and the battles county leaders face will continue to increase. As the state's purse strings grow tighter, undoubtedly county governments will be called upon to defend the services and resources that make our communities so special to us. However, we can overcome these obstacles if we stay focused on our purpose, and our purpose is clear: to advocate for stronger county governments to better serve the citizens of Alabama. And we must be diligent, because as Sir Winston Churchill also said, "It is wonderful what great strides can be made when there is resolute purpose behind them." ■

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*House Speaker Mac McCutcheon and his wife Debbie with grandchildren Lizzie and Jake.*

## IN PROFILE

# House Speaker Mac McCutcheon

**O**n a quiet day at the courthouse, would you ever let your grandchild try out the chairman's gavel?

Would you do the same thing in the Alabama House of Representatives' chamber?

If you were House Speaker Mac McCutcheon, you would. That's just the kind of man he is, and six months into his term as speaker, he seems unfazed by his influence.

He spent his first few months realigning committees and instituting his style of leadership, which meant more time in Montgomery. But he'd still rather camp in his RV on the Alabama River than rent an apartment in the Capital City.

First elected to the House of Representatives in 2006, McCutcheon has held progressively larger leadership roles since Republicans won a majority in 2010. He was chairing the powerful House Rules Committee, responsible for choosing the legislation

considered on the floor, when his colleagues elected him speaker.

He calls the unincorporated Monrovia community home and serves a district that includes portions of Madison and Limestone counties. McCutcheon, who has farmed in the past, retired from the Huntsville Police Department with 28 years of service. He's also a preacher, known to officiate at weddings for legislative colleagues and part-time House staff members alike.

He took over the gavel last August during a high-pressure special session dominated by a state budget crisis and controversial gambling legislation.

These and other tough issues –

overcrowded prisons, crumbling roads and bridges – have carried over into 2017.

The year has also brought new optimism that the Trump administration's changes at the federal level will help the state with Medicaid, environmental regulations and infrastructure.

"The entire country is in need of a major overhaul of our infrastructure, including Alabama," said McCutcheon, who in 2016 sponsored an ACCA-supported six-cent per gallon fuel tax increase. It did not become law.

He has spent a large part of the last few years focused on transportation, as a member of the Alabama Transportation Rehabilitation and Improvement Program (ATRIP) committee and chairing the Legislature's Joint Transportation Committee. In that role, he convened a series of regional hearings that focused attention on badly deteriorated transportation infrastructure as well as its consequences for the state's economy and Alabamian's quality of life.

Funding is the central issue. "We've made some significant progress by educating the public and the Legislature on the situation we find ourselves in, and I would like for us to continue that debate and discussion," he said.



**2017 Session**

“One of the biggest challenges we face is funding our state government, and when I say state government I include education and state services. One of the things that we have found through this budget reform commission is that we are taxing the people of Alabama from a 20<sup>th</sup> century perspective.

We need to take a serious look at how we receive revenues from the taxpayers and make a determination whether or not this is the best way for us to be fair to the taxpayers as well as get the maximum amount of benefit out of the revenue.”

**Transportation Funding**

“I would like to see funding for our infrastructure in the state. Because in

2015-16 we started talking about the infrastructure needs we have, going all over the state listening to county com-



missions, local officials, mayors, etc. about the problems we face funding our infrastructure. I think we’ve made some significant progress by educating the public and the Legislature on the situation we find ourselves in, and I would like for us to continue that debate and discussion.”

**Next Steps**

“For the last 10 years of my term as a legislator, all we

have really done is just put a Band-Aid on the problem. We’ve done a lot of good work on the infrastructure, but it’s all been off of borrowed money. We need to sit down and look at a long-term plan

**SPEAKER MCCUTCHEON  
on the  
issues**

that will take care of not only the local issue that every county’s facing, but the state-level issues that we have.”

**Pension Reform**

“Every year that we come into session, we have a request from the state retirement system to increase funding, to make the contribution whole for state employees.... RSA is operating at a minimal administrative cost; so I don’t think it’s right for us to turn around

and point fingers of blame at each other. I’m committed as speaker of the house to work directly with RSA to find solutions to make our state retirement system financially secure.”

**ACCA**

“The Association of County Commissioners has been a great organization to work with. They are always ready to come to the table, sit down and talk about the issues, and carry the message back to each county and be a good resource for the county governments and the state government.”

**Unfunded Mandates**

“It is unfair for the Legislature to pass

unfunded mandates down to local governments. Any type of legislative mandate that is passed down to the local county governments must be vetted by the Legislature to make sure it does not place an undue financial burden on local governments – not only the counties but the cities as well.”

**Working More Effectively with Members of the House of Representatives**

“There needs to be a collaborative spirit between county commissioners and state legislators. We need a good working relationship and respect for what we do. And we need to understand each other better so we can talk through some of the issues that we’re facing, rather than the counties doing their thing and the state legislators doing their thing and we’re not working together.”

As for his work as speaker, McCutcheon acknowledged his responsibility to keep the legislative process functioning. “I feel like I’m serving the legislators more,” he said. “When we accomplish things, it’s just a good feeling. I like to promote good will, a positive-type working environment.”

Face facts. Work together. Take the long view.

Those were the themes McCutcheon cited again and again as he spoke of 2017’s stout challenges.

“I’m looking at things long term, not just a year-to-year fix,” he said from his Statehouse office. “I’ve been here for 10 years, and I’ve seen enough of that. And I just feel like we can do better. The people of Alabama deserve better from their government.” ■





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## ***DISCUSSING THE THREE-CENT BOND ISSUE WITH CONSTITUENTS AND LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS***

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- The original ATRIP program was introduced in 2012 as a bold infrastructure initiative to improve Alabama's declining local roads and bridges.
- Over 200 new road projects have been completed under ATRIP, but Alabama's remaining infrastructure is still in rapid deterioration.
- October 2017 is the deadline for all projects to be submitted under ATRIP. Many engineers fear the momentum gained under the program will come to a halt, when there is still much work to be done.
- A recent study by TRIP (a transportation research firm) estimates that the average American driver pay an extra \$523 per year in vehicle maintenance costs from driving over potholes and cracked roads.
- The bond issue, known as ATRIP-2, would help offset some of that cost, while continuing the positive economic impact and safety improvements of ATRIP.
- The original ATRIP program was primarily funded with federal dollars, which limited the eligible roads for improvements to those with high traffic volumes.
- ATRIP-2 will include roads that are not eligible for federal funds, as well as the more than 1000 bridges that cannot support the weight of a school bus.
- The \$1.2 billion investment will put Alabamians to work, and many of the projects will be let to contract before the end of 2017.



## ***DISCUSSING THE THREE-CENT BOND ISSUE WITH CONSTITUENTS AND LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS***

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- All in all, it is estimated that the bond issue would fund 12,320 new miles of road, and over 450 new bridge structures across the state.
- The bond issue is totally financed by a 3-cent increase in diesel and gasoline tax that will automatically end when the bonds are repaid.
- The increase would cost the average Alabama driver about \$1.50 each month -- about a nickel/day.
- The minimum allocation for each county is \$10 million, but the average award is about \$18 million per county. Many of the larger counties would receive upwards of \$35 million.
- The revenue can ONLY be spent on road and bridge projects. It CAN NOT be spent on salaries, equipment, or any construction other than roads and bridges.
- All projects will be let to contract by each county using Rural Road guide lines, and the individual projects will not require approval from ALDOT.
- This will allow local leaders to determine which roads and bridges will be improved, without being limited by state and federal regulation.
- President Trump has placed a new federal emphasis on infrastructure. Under this plan, 20 percent of revenue in each county could be used to match federal funds should the new Congress enact a federal infrastructure program.
- 20 percent of each county's allocation would also be divided among the cities, based on their population





# Estimates | Proposed ATRIP-2 Bond Issue

	County Population	% of State Population	Total Revenue
<b>AUTAUGA COUNTY</b>	55,395	1.14%	\$15,598,958.60
<b>BALDWIN COUNTY</b>	200,111	4.13%	\$35,294,799.94
<b>BARBOUR COUNTY</b>	26,887	0.55%	\$11,719,021.03
<b>BIBB COUNTY</b>	22,506	0.46%	\$11,122,767.12
<b>BLOUNT COUNTY</b>	57,719	1.19%	\$15,915,254.90
<b>BULLOCK COUNTY</b>	10,764	0.22%	\$10,000,000.00
<b>BUTLER COUNTY</b>	20,296	0.42%	\$10,821,986.21
<b>CALHOUN COUNTY</b>	115,916	2.39%	\$23,835,864.08
<b>CHAMBERS COUNTY</b>	34,076	0.70%	\$12,697,443.62
<b>CHEROKEE COUNTY</b>	26,037	0.54%	\$11,603,336.07
<b>CHILTON COUNTY</b>	43,931	0.91%	\$14,038,708.69
<b>CHOCTAW COUNTY</b>	13,323	0.27%	\$10,000,000.00
<b>CLARKE COUNTY</b>	24,945	0.51%	\$11,454,714.91
<b>CLAY COUNTY</b>	13,552	0.28%	\$10,000,000.00
<b>CLEBURNE COUNTY</b>	15,080	0.31%	\$10,112,088.84
<b>COFFEE COUNTY</b>	50,909	1.05%	\$14,988,414.19
<b>COLBERT COUNTY</b>	54,543	1.12%	\$15,483,001.43
<b>CONECUH COUNTY</b>	12,670	0.26%	\$10,000,000.00
<b>COOSA COUNTY</b>	10,886	0.22%	\$10,000,000.00
<b>COVINGTON COUNTY</b>	37,914	0.78%	\$13,219,795.25
<b>CRENSHAW COUNTY</b>	13,977	0.29%	\$10,000,000.00
<b>CULLMAN COUNTY</b>	81,289	1.68%	\$19,123,130.88
<b>DALE COUNTY</b>	49,484	1.02%	\$14,794,471.75
<b>DALLAS COUNTY</b>	41,711	0.86%	\$13,736,566.79
<b>DEKALB COUNTY</b>	71,065	1.47%	\$17,731,644.92
<b>ELMORE COUNTY</b>	80,977	1.67%	\$19,080,667.69
<b>ESCAMBIA COUNTY</b>	37,733	0.78%	\$13,195,161.16
<b>ETOWAH COUNTY</b>	103,531	2.13%	\$22,150,266.12
<b>FAYETTE COUNTY</b>	16,874	0.35%	\$10,356,252.16
<b>FRANKLIN COUNTY</b>	31,601	0.65%	\$12,360,596.23
<b>GENEVA COUNTY</b>	26,712	0.55%	\$11,695,203.54
<b>GREENE COUNTY</b>	8,553	0.18%	\$10,000,000.00
<b>HALE COUNTY</b>	15,184	0.31%	\$10,126,243.24
<b>HENRY COUNTY</b>	17,190	0.35%	\$10,399,259.75



# Estimates | Proposed ATRIP-2 Bond Issue

	County Population	% of State Population	Total Revenue
<b>HOUSTON COUNTY</b>	104,193	2.15%	\$22,240,364.29
<b>JACKSON COUNTY</b>	52,665	1.09%	\$15,227,405.72
<b>JEFFERSON COUNTY</b>	660,793	13.63%	\$97,993,600.22
<b>LAMAR COUNTY</b>	14,086	0.29%	\$10,000,000.00
<b>LAUDERDALE COUNTY</b>	93,096	1.92%	\$20,730,063.07
<b>LAWRENCE COUNTY</b>	33,477	0.69%	\$12,615,919.74
<b>LEE COUNTY</b>	154,255	3.18%	\$29,053,800.32
<b>LIMESTONE COUNTY</b>	90,787	1.87%	\$20,415,808.27
<b>LOWNDES COUNTY</b>	10,580	0.22%	\$10,000,000.00
<b>MACON COUNTY</b>	19,425	0.40%	\$10,703,443.15
<b>MADISON COUNTY</b>	350,299	7.22%	\$55,735,380.24
<b>MARENGO COUNTY</b>	20,110	0.41%	\$10,796,671.62
<b>MARION COUNTY</b>	30,271	0.62%	\$12,179,583.28
<b>MARSHALL COUNTY</b>	94,636	1.95%	\$20,939,657.00
<b>MOBILE COUNTY</b>	415,123	8.56%	\$64,557,923.84
<b>MONROE COUNTY</b>	21,947	0.45%	\$11,046,687.24
<b>MONTGOMERY COUNTY</b>	226,189	4.66%	\$38,844,014.61
<b>MORGAN COUNTY</b>	119,607	2.47%	\$24,338,209.02
<b>PERRY COUNTY</b>	9,826	0.20%	\$10,000,000.00
<b>PICKENS COUNTY</b>	20,365	0.42%	\$10,831,377.11
<b>PIKE COUNTY</b>	33,389	0.69%	\$12,603,942.95
<b>RANDOLPH COUNTY</b>	22,539	0.46%	\$11,127,258.42
<b>RUSSELL COUNTY</b>	59,608	1.23%	\$16,172,347.71
<b>SHELBY COUNTY</b>	206,655	4.26%	\$36,185,438.06
<b>ST. CLAIR COUNTY</b>	86,697	1.79%	\$19,859,159.44
<b>SUMTER COUNTY</b>	13,166	0.27%	\$10,000,000.00
<b>TALLADEGA COUNTY</b>	81,322	1.68%	\$19,127,622.18
<b>TALLAPOOSA COUNTY</b>	41,165	0.85%	\$13,662,256.21
<b>TUSCALOOSA COUNTY</b>	202,212	4.17%	\$35,580,745.95
<b>WALKER COUNTY</b>	65,471	1.35%	\$16,970,301.76
<b>WASHINGTON COUNTY</b>	16,834	0.35%	\$10,350,808.16
<b>WILCOX COUNTY</b>	11,098	0.23%	\$10,000,000.00
<b>WINSTON COUNTY</b>	24,150	0.50%	\$11,346,515.45
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>4,849,377</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$1,203,891,924.15</b>







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# ACCA Legislative Priorities

*The 2017 Legislative Priorities were presented to the ACCA Board of Directors and approved at its meeting on December 7, 2016. The Board of Directors directed the ACCA Staff to actively pursue passage of legislation on any or all of the strategic goals.*

## Changes to ALGTI Board

The Alabama Local Government Training Institute was enacted through legislation proposed by the Association to provide training and education to newly elected county commissioners on the powers, duties, and responsibilities of their official position. ALGTI also oversees the County Government Education Institute that administers training programs and professional services for a variety of county employees.

The Association proposes to introduce legislation amending the current membership of the ALGTI Board to ensure representation of those county groups participating in its programs and allow the Institute to provide certification to local emergency management programs.



## Retirement Systems of Alabama Board of Control

The current guidelines for appointments to the Retirement Systems of Alabama (RSA) Board of Control do not properly reflect the



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employing agencies of the participating members of the system. The appointment process is set out in Ala. Code §36-27-23, and in addition to four ex officio trustees, it also calls for the following:

- Three members of the system to be appointed by the Governor;
- Two vested members of the State Employee's Retirement systems to be elected;
- One retired state employee as well as one retired city, county, or public agency employee to be elected; and
- Two elected members whose employers are participating in the system pursuant to Ala. Code §36- 27-6.

The Association proposes to amend the statute regarding the appointment of members to the Board of Control of the Retirement Systems of Alabama to ensure that all employing agencies participating in the system have adequate representation on the Board.

### Amendment to Alabama Competitive Bid Law

Currently, counties must seek bids for the repair of heavy equipment by the manufacturer because the costs generally exceed the \$15,000 discretionary spending limit. This constraint often makes it more difficult for county engineers to use the most practical and expedient path for repairs to heavy equipment. The Association proposes to introduce a minor amendment to the current bid law to exempt the repair of brand name equipment by the factory-authorized dealer.

### ATRIP 2: Road and Bridge Funding

In light of the state's deteriorating infrastructure, the Association has advocated for the Legislature to pass a new revenue measure to improve Alabama's road and bridge infrastructure. Those efforts eventually became part of a larger effort that included stakeholders from across the state – with varying levels of interest and commitment to the cause. In many ways, the coalition supporting new infrastructure investments created additional barriers in the push to pass additional funding – namely, no real consensus on the best approach to do so.

For the 2017 Regular Session, the Association proposes legislation to establish the ATRIP-2 Program. This program would provide for a \$1.2 billion bond

issue dedicated to the rehabilitation and improvement of county and municipal roads and bridges. This legislation would utilize revenue from a 3-cent per gallon gasoline and diesel fuel increase as well as an increase in alternative fuel vehicle tag fees for the debt service of the bond issue.

### Medicaid for Inmates

During the 2016 Regular Session, Senator Ward passed legislation to alter the Medicaid eligibility of persons in the custody of the Department of Corrections. The legislation provided for those individuals' Medicaid eligibility be suspended, but not terminated, so long as the individual be otherwise eligible for Medicaid benefits. This provision also allowed for the temporary reinstatement of Medicaid eligibility for care received if the individual were to be an inpatient in a medical institution for more than 24 hours.

The Association proposes to introduce legislation in the upcoming session to amend Alabama's Medicaid law to also suspend Medicaid eligibility of individuals in county jails rather than terminating their Medicaid benefits.

*67 Counties, One Voice*

### Juvenile Justice Reform

The state's juvenile justice system is costly, inefficient and in many instances, ineffective. Today, counties pay a disproportionate share of the local costs associated with juveniles entering the justice system. During the 2016 Legislative Session, the Association passed a resolution creating the Alabama Juvenile Justice Task Force to make recommendations for changes in the law that would ensure more equitable participation from state, county and municipal stakeholders in the funding and the administrative care of juvenile justice at the local level.

The Association proposes to amend current Alabama law to create a more balanced financial allocation between municipal and county governments for the housing, medical care, and transportation of juveniles participating in the juvenile justice system.

## Board of Registrars

Alabama law provides that members of the board of registrars are to be appointed by the Governor, State Auditor, and Commissioner of Agriculture and Industries. There is little uniformity in the day-to-day duties performed by each registrar and no statutorily required state or local oversight over the registrars' work hours, qualification requirements or voter registration procedures.

Under the direction of the Secretary of State, a Board of Registrars Study Commission was convened to address possible revisions to the current system. The Association proposes reforms to the current Board of Registrars system that would provide the following:

- Registrars must work at least 4 hour per day
- Those persons appointed must meet minimal standards for appointment to the corresponding state job classification that most closely aligns with registrar duties.
- That an official or commission at the local or state level be authorized to supervise the daily operation of the registrar office.



## Simplified Sellers Use Tax

The Simplified Sellers Use Tax Remittance Act, established in 2015 by the Association and other stakeholders, allows eligible online sellers to remit the use tax on items delivered into Alabama on their customers' behalf. Participation in the program is limited to sellers that do not have a physical presence in this state and are not currently subject to the requirements for collecting and remitting sales and use tax that otherwise would not be collected in Alabama. The Simplified Sellers Use Tax Remittance Act has continued to see increased revenues since its enactment, and will potentially provide millions to the State, counties and municipalities in the coming years.

The Association, in coordination with the Department of Revenue, proposes to support legislation to amend the Act to make the following minor improvements:

- Allow monthly distributions to local governments rather than the current quarterly distributions
- Allow disclosure of participating company names
- Eliminate the 6 month deferral language for eligible sellers to promote in-state economic development

- Provide retail reporting obligation for remote sellers, with an exemption for those companies remitting simplified sellers use tax or sales tax on transactions.



## Clarifying Official Authorized to Settle Tax Appeal Cases

During the 2016 regular session, the Association passed legislation to allow Alabama counties to hire outside counsel to address the "Dark Store Litigation" occurring across the state. This legislation also allows the county commission to appropriate funds from the county's reappraisal budget to pay for this legal representation.

The law is still unclear about which official is authorized to approve the settlement of such property tax appeals. This has created challenges on the local level as to which official has the authority to settle or proceed with litigation. The Association proposes to introduce legislation clarifying that only the elected local tax official may approve the settlement of lawsuits challenging the appraised value of property for ad valorem cases.



## Uniform Procedure for Funds from Tax Sales

There are inconsistencies in the law on the proper procedures for the placement of excess funds from real estate tax sales, including when and how the excess funds are to be deposited to the credit of the county general fund as well as when and how those funds may be redeemed by the owner.

Under current law, after the three-year period following a tax sale, a county commission must deposit any excess funds from the tax sale to the credit of the county's general fund account. If an authorized party fails to properly redeem the property within 10 years of the tax sale, any excess funds (including interest earned) then become the property of the county.

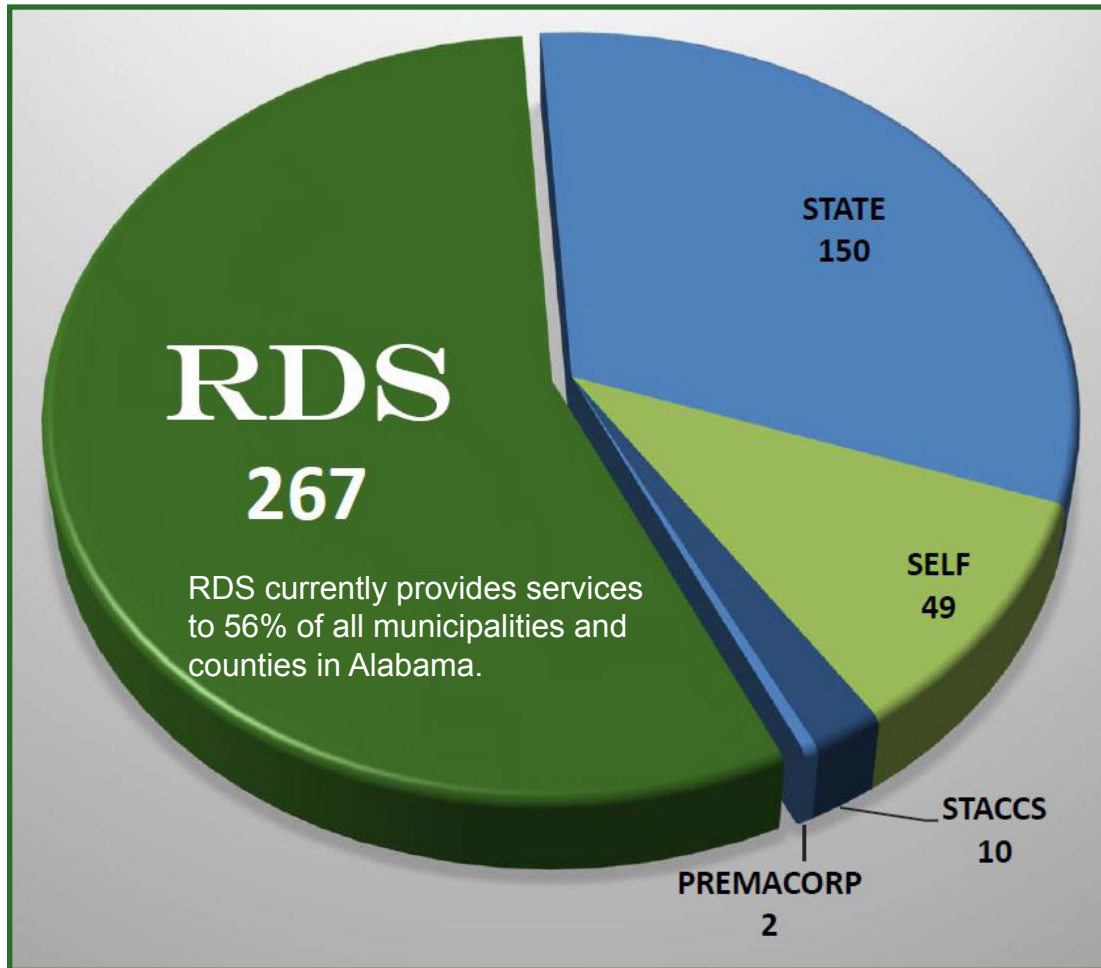
The Association proposes legislation that clarifies that this standard would be applied to all funds currently held by a county, regardless of when the tax sale took place. Additionally, the legislation would also affirm, validate, and ratify any prior action taken by a county regarding the placement of those excess funds.



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# ACCA COUNTY DAYS

As an important part of our effort to ensure the Alabama Legislature is constantly hearing “67 Counties, One Voice”, we will once again be hosting County Days during the 2017 Legislative Session. Each county has been assigned one day to come to Montgomery and “walk the halls” to help make sure all your legislators are aware of – and supporting – the interests of county government when considering legislation. The schedule has been designed to provide for all regions of the state to be represented on each of the six designated days. Representation from each county on its day will be key to the success of this effort. All county commissioners and all key staff are encouraged to participate and join us at the Statehouse on your day.

The schedule for each County Day is set out below -- and should not require an overnight stay. More details will be distributed as each County Day draws near, but please get this date on your calendar and make plans now to participate in this important event.

## SCHEDULE

11:00 a.m.—Briefing and lunch at the ACCA Office Building

12:00 p.m.—Lobbying at the Alabama State House



### Wednesday, Feb. 22, 2017

Butler, Elmore, Geneva, Marengo, Mobile, Monroe, Morgan, Perry, Pickens, Pike, St. Clair, Walker

### Wednesday, Mar. 8, 2017

Autauga, Baldwin, Cleburne, Coffee, Colbert, Escambia, Hale, Jefferson, Lauderdale, Marion, Tuscaloosa

### Wednesday, Mar. 29, 2017

Barbour, Chambers, Choctaw, Clarke, Coosa, DeKalb, Lamar, Lawrence, Madison, Montgomery, Shelby

### Wednesday, Apr. 5, 2017

Cherokee, Calhoun, Chilton, Crenshaw, Etowah, Limestone, Marshall, Russell, Tallapoosa, Wilcox, Winston

### Wednesday, Apr. 26, 2017

Bullock, Covington, Dale, Dallas, Fayette, Greene, Jackson, Lee, Talladega, Washington

### Wednesday, May 3, 2017

Bibb, Blount, Clay, Conecuh, Cullman, Franklin, Henry, Houston, Lowndes, Macon, Randolph, Sumter

## Communication Tools

# Digital Strategies for the Session

When you stand in the sixth-floor gallery of the Alabama Statehouse and look out into the House Chamber, what do you see? You may say that you see lawmakers doing business, voting “yes” or “no” on bills with little or much historical significance. You may say that you see suits or red carpet or men and women discussing today’s issues in hushed tones. Look past that and think about what else you see. What are they all carrying in their hands? If you say that you see cell phones (and you do) you’re correct.

It’s an astute observation that we’ve come to make in recent years; when the legislators aren’t actively engaged in their immediate tasks, they are looking at their cell phones. We can’t say for sure what they’re looking at or reading, but we are willing to make the speculation that they’re keeping up with what the internet has to say about the political affairs of that day. Between emails, Twitter, Facebook, push notifications, apps, and an interminable host of other ways to keep cell phone users connected – and connected right this very second – it’s no wonder that our lawmakers look to their devices to stay informed. Keeping this in mind, the Association made the decision to focus communication efforts for the 2017 Legislative Session on the digital platform.

### Introducing the ACCA67 Phone App

Rolling out last month, the ACCA67 app is the best way for you to keep up with the most up-to-date happenings of the legislative



session. This app’s unique features were all designed to help you effectively advocate and stay aware during the session.

### Our Top Four Favorite Features

1. **Legislative Directory** – *This contains the names, photographs, and contact information of every Alabama Legislator. This will be useful to you during the session when an Association staff member calls with an immediate request for you to contact your legislator.*
2. **Calendar of Events** – *The Association provides many opportunities throughout the year for you to learn, grow, connect, and network. The Calendar of Events feature puts those opportunities right at your fingertips for a quick reference.*
3. **Photo Gallery** – *Did you take a great photo at one of your events, but you aren’t sure how to share it with the membership? The Photo Gallery is the*



*perfect solution. Upload your photos right from your phone onto the app, and let everyone see what your county is doing!*

- 4. **E-Forms** – Registering for Association events keeps staff informed, and your leadership abilities at their peak. We’ve made it easy with the E-Forms feature. Register right from your phone and don’t worry about ever having to miss out.

**Legislative Reports**

Emailed Legislative Reports are a tool that the Association has used for years to keep County Officials informed on what’s happening day-by-day in the legislature. This year, in the interest of your time, the staff has decided to take a different approach.

- **The Goat Hill Preview** – The Monday newsletter will contain an overview

**For any questions about the ACCA67 app or other communication efforts, contact Jeannie Gaines at [jgaines@alabamacounties.org](mailto:jgaines@alabamacounties.org)**

- **The Goat Hill Recap** – The Friday newsletter is an overview of the legislative actions that occurred during the week.
- **The Goat Hill Alert** – This newsletter will be issued on an as-needed basis, it and will usually include an immediate action step that we would like for you to take. This action step will be paired with a red ‘Take Action!’ icon.

Sometimes it isn’t always what you know, but it’s who you know.

The Legislative Contacts Survey lets us know just that.

History has shown that a special

relationship can make a meaningful difference when seeking support or opposition from legislators on important county issues – particularly in the heat of a legislative battle. Fill out the survey and let ACCA know who you know!

The 2017 Legislative Session finds county leaders right in the peak of the digital age.

While we know that the digital frontier is the quickest way to stay connected, it isn’t always the most meaningful.

Keep in mind that during this session, personal touch reigns supreme. Contacting your legislators six times a year puts you



of anticipated legislative activities for the week.

- **The Goat Hill Bulletin** – Delivered to your inbox on Wednesday, this newsletter is a mid-week progress report on legislative actions related to county government.

**What do you know?**

With the Legislative Tracking Charts, you’ll know it all. Similar to previous sessions, the Tracking Charts can be found on our website ([www.alabamacounties.org](http://www.alabamacounties.org)) in the upper left hand corner. This is where you can find up-to-date tracking information on Association bills, danger bills and affiliate tracking charts.

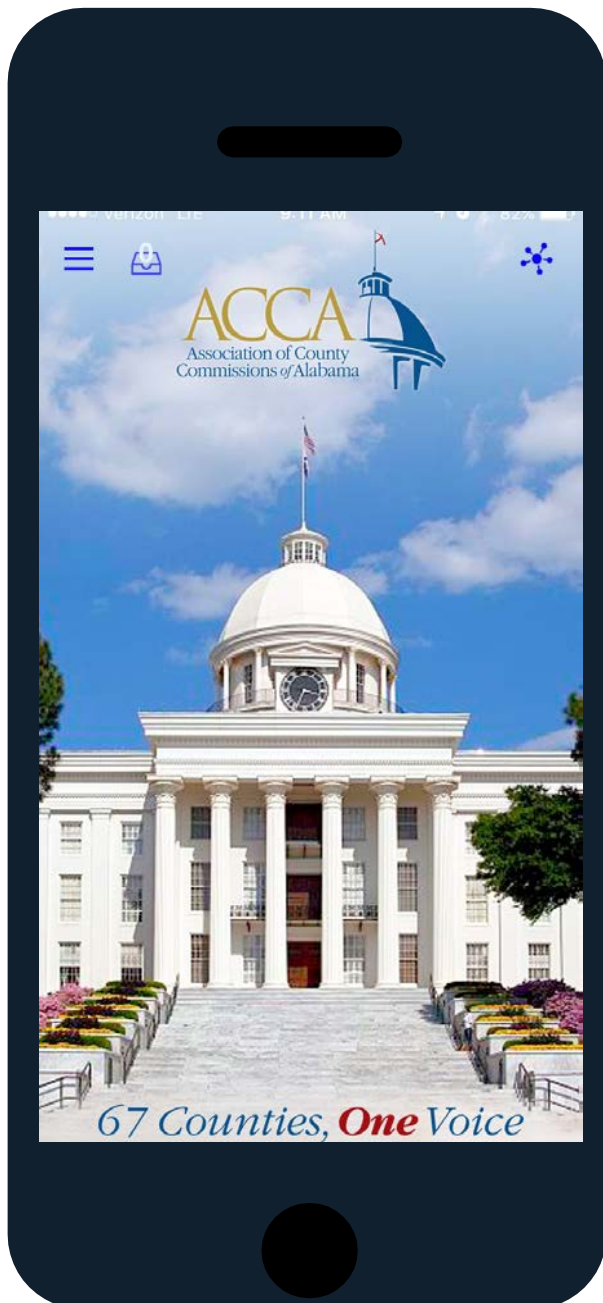
in the .01 percent of the entire population.

This will be beneficial for you and meaningful to your legislator when you are vying for their time and attention during the session. Remember that your voice as a County Official is important to our lawmakers, and that voice will be even more significant if you take the time to reach out to them personally.

# Have you downloaded the **ACCA67** app?

We've put the legislature at your fingertips! Enjoy these helpful features:

- Legislative Directory
- ACCA Calendar of Events
- Event Registration
- Bill Tracking
- Photo Gallery
- County News
- Find My Car



Contact Jeannie Gaines at  
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# 2017 Alabama County Platform

The 2017 Alabama County Platform  
was approved by vote of the  
ACCA Membership on December 8, 2016.

*The 2017 Alabama County Platform was approved by vote of the ACCA Membership on December 8, 2016.*

## County Expenditures for Compensation and Benefits

### Foundation Principle

The County Commission is charged with making the budgeting decisions necessary to provide the most effective and efficient services to the citizens within the revenue available in each of the 67 courthouses. Legislatively-mandated adjustments in salary and benefits pose a threat to the delivery of such services. For this reason, the Association opposes any legislation which mandates any expenditure of county revenues for the payment of compensation, salary supplements, expense allowances, or benefits for current or former government officials or employees.

### Strategic Goals

In furtherance of this Foundation Principle, the Association will actively pursue the passage of legislation to accomplish the following strategic goals:

- To reform Alabama's workers' compensation law

by reasonably reducing medical costs while not subjecting employers to increased payments or expenditures.



- To amend the statute regarding the appointment of members to the Board of Control of the Retirement Systems of Alabama to more closely reflect the employing agencies of the participating members of the system.

### Legislative Policy

In addition to its strategic goals, the Association has adopted the following legislative policy consistent with this Foundation Principle:

- Support for the Omnibus Pay Act in its current form and opposition to any requirement to provide or increase compensation, benefits, or county-paid salary supplements for state or local officials.



- Opposition to mandated and unfunded

requirements to provide or increase compensation or benefits for any county-paid personnel or volunteers.

- Opposition to shifting responsibility for the payment of the employee-share of retirement contributions for probate judges to the counties.

- Support for the elimination of all supernumerary programs and opposition to any mandated and unfunded increases in payments

made under existing programs.

- Support for authorizing cost of living increases for state and local retirees provided such legislation only applies to retirees in a particular county if approved by the county commission.

- Belief that any retirement program changes should not apply to local participants without approval of the county commission.

- Support for authorizing counties to establish civil service systems provided the creation of such systems does not provide for collective bargaining.

## Alabama Governmental Structure

### Foundation Principle

The relationship between Alabama counties and the Alabama Legislature is established in



constitutional and statutory law. The preservation of a constitutional relationship between the State of Alabama and its counties, as well as a workable and productive statutory allocation of responsibilities between the state and the counties is essential to the delivery of services. Therefore, Alabama counties encourage the Alabama Legislature to fully fund state agencies and opposes the shifting of costs and administrative responsibility of state functions to the local level through the state budget process.



### Strategic Goals

In furtherance of this Foundation Principle, the Association will actively pursue the passage of legislation to accomplish the following strategic goals:

- To shift the statutorily-required publication of legal notices from a “newspaper” to publication on a website maintained by the state or by each individual county.
- To provide a constitutional amendment to ensure open debate of local legislation.

### Legislative Policy

In addition to its strategic goals, the Association has adopted the following legislative policy

consistent with this Foundation Principle:

- Opposition to removing or impeding local control of the county department of human resources.
- Opposition to abolishing regional planning commissions.
- Support for continued

application of current constitutional and statutory provisions providing that elected officials can only be removed from office through the process of impeachment.

- Support for Alabama’s current structure for enacting or amending state general or local laws and belief that no provision allowing for citizen referendum should be enacted.
- Belief that individual property rights must be balanced with adequate means to protect the health, safety, and welfare of all citizens.
- Belief that any additional restrictions on the use of constitutional and statutory procedures for condemnation of private property for necessary governmental purposes will serve to harm the collective well-being of all citizens.
- Opposition to restricting or limiting a county commission’s authority

to independently make decisions related to county property.

- Opposition to shifting the control of county property to the oversight of a legislatively-established committee or state agency. Specifically, the Association strongly opposes the requirement that movement or renaming of monuments, buildings or streets be approved by such a committee.
- Support for local legislation providing for (6) year terms of office for County Commissioner.

## Mandated and Unfunded Legislation

### Foundation Principle

Without the authority to levy taxes or even collect fees for services, Alabama counties constantly struggle to provide an adequate level of services to ensure health, safety and prosperity of local citizens. Alabama’s constitution provides protection from the enactment of mandated and unfunded responsibilities onto county government to ensure





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the financial integrity of the commission. The Association strongly supports the intent of Alabama's constitutional language prohibiting the enactment of unfunded mandates and opposes the establishment of such mandates through federal or state administrative actions.



### Strategic Goals

In furtherance of this Foundation Principle, the Association will actively pursue the passage of legislation to accomplish the following strategic goals:

- To amend the unfunded mandate constitutional amendment to provide that the exemption for defining crimes apply only to provisions of the law defining or amending a crime.

### Legislative Policy

In addition to its strategic goals, the Association has adopted the following legislative policy consistent with this Foundation Principle:

- Opposition to federal and state efforts to require county government to assume any financial or programmatic responsibilities that are currently financed and/or administered at the federal or state level.
- Opposition to any mandated and unfunded requirement that counties assume new programs established by the federal or state government.

- Opposition to any federal or state legislative, administrative, or regulatory directives requiring county government to assume inspection, public safety, permitting responsibilities or other duties currently performed by the state or federal agency.

- Opposition to any legislative or regulatory directives requiring counties to provide housing, supplies, equipment or other expenses for a county coroner or other county officers.

- Opposition to state agencies administratively eliminating state services within a county for budgetary or other reasons without legislative approval.

## County Operations and Budget Authority

### Foundation Principle

The county governing body serves as both the legislative and administrative branch of government at the local level – carrying out both budgetary duties as well as providing administrative leadership for many functions. The budgetary,

personnel and administrative functions carried out by the county commission are essential to the financial and operational health of county government in Alabama. The Association opposes any efforts that will obstruct the commission's ability to effectively govern and to maintain the administrative and financial well-being of the services delivered by the county commission.

### Strategic Goals

In furtherance of this Foundation Principle, the Association will actively pursue the passage of legislation to accomplish the following strategic goals:

- To provide that the county commission sets the hours of operation of county offices. To clarify statutory language related to use of county warrants and bonds.
- To protect counties, officials, employees, or agents against liability





for official actions provided there is no change in the statutory damage cap for awards against counties.

- To require municipalities to provide animal control services within its jurisdictional limits or contribute a pro rata share of services provided by the county.
- To amend the membership of the Alabama Local Government Training Institute to ensure representation of those groups participating in its programs and to allow the Institute to award certification to local emergency management programs.
- To clarify that only the elected local tax official may approve a settlement of lawsuits challenging the appraised value of property for ad valorem purposes.

### Legislative Policy

In addition to its strategic goals, the Association has adopted the following legislative policy consistent with this Foundation Principle:

- Opposition to changes in the current CDARS Program and public depository law that could result in greater risk to the stability of county deposits.
- Belief that the Open Records Law adequately protects a citizen's right to access of public documents.
- Opposition to efforts to remove or increase the current statutory damage cap in actions brought against county officials or employees or to repeal

the prohibition against punitive damages.

- Opposition to any efforts to require counties to pay attorney fees.
- Support for the county commission role in adopting and enforcing the county budget and opposition to any efforts to weaken or direct the county commission's exercise of this legislative authority.
- Opposition to requiring the county commission to vote or take action on a particular measure or issue.
- Support for limiting use of out-of-state cooperative programs for purchases available on county joint bid list.

## Election Administration

### Foundation Principle

Alabama's election laws must maintain an unquestioned level of integrity and objectivity while avoiding the wasteful spending of limited local and state resources. Likewise, the reporting and disclosure requirements placed on



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candidates only serve to bolster such efforts to garner public confidence in the election process. The Association supports efforts to eliminate many of the unenforceable and overbroad provisions of Alabama's election law while not generating additional unnecessary costs or burdens at the local level.

### Strategic Goals

In furtherance of this Foundation Principle, the Association will actively pursue the passage of legislation to accomplish the following strategic goals:

- To eliminate the requirement that the county commission set and fund school tax elections for municipal school systems.
- Support legislation amending Alabama law reforming the current Board of Registrar system to provide more accountability, state and local oversight, and



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minimum qualifications for appointments.

- To allow the county commission, in its discretion, to assume responsibility for the absentee election function when there is a change in the office of circuit clerk.



- Support for authorizing counties to satisfy election-related publication requirements by posting information on a public website and making copies available at the courthouse.

## Environment, Land Use, & Public Works

### Legislative Policy

In addition to its strategic goals, the Association has adopted the following legislative policy consistent with this Foundation Principle:

- Opposition to eliminating a runoff election except in the most extreme

circumstances where the outcome of the primary is inevitable.

- Support for any legislative or administrative efforts aimed at eliminating waste and reducing state and county election expenses provided such efforts maintain the integrity of the election process.

### Foundation Principle

County government's role in the effective administration and enforcement of Alabama's law affecting environmental issues, land use and public works administration is often confusing. Counties lack land-use authority, but are required

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to grant initial approval for landfills. Counties seek to enhance the delivery of services by improving their public facilities and programs, but often are impeded by federal and state regulations, inspections, and prohibitions that do not serve the public's best interests.

The exercise of extra-jurisdictional powers by municipalities further clouds the role of county government. The



Association seeks legislative and administrative solutions to these conflicts and encourages all related agencies to interact with counties to ensure the proper delivery of services and the enforcement of requirements and regulations.

### Strategic Goals

In furtherance of this Foundation Principle, the Association will actively pursue the passage of

legislation to accomplish the following strategic goals:

- To more clearly define the county commission's responsibilities in granting host government approval of new or expanding landfills.
- To limit the exercise of municipal powers or taxation outside the jurisdiction's corporate limits.

### Legislative Policy

In addition to its strategic goals, the Association has adopted the following legislative policy consistent with this Foundation Principle:

- Opposition to any statutory or administrative increase in fees

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charged by a state agency if such increases will be paid by county government or county-established agencies.



■ Support for restoring state EMA revenues in the state general fund budget to ensure both state and county EMA programs receive proper funding.

■ Support for shifting state responsibility for flood plain management from ADECA to an agency interacting more directly with FEMA.

■ Support for improving existing solid waste laws and better defining the roles of all stakeholders.

■ Opposition to municipalities using unconventional annexation procedures to avoid the legal responsibility to maintain public roads included in newly-annexed areas.

■ Support for increasing the minimum cost of a construction project amount which requires the county to employ the services of a licensed general contractor or architect.

■ Opposition to relaxing or eliminating competitive bidding requirements for construction projects or granting a contractor sole responsibility for selecting the successful bidder.

■ Opposition to allowing a project manager to approve construction contract changes without approval of the governing body and/or compliance with the public works law.

■ Support requiring the Forever Wild Board to make annual payments

from its Stewardship Account in an amount equal to the ad valorem taxes lost by the purchase of lands previously held by private ownership.

services. Likewise, the Legislature considers the abatement or exemption of many taxes levied by or on behalf of the county commission. County services cannot be funded during either the short- or long-term if the necessary revenue is interrupted. The Association opposes mandated abatement or exemption of the local proceeds of any taxes as well as the alteration of the allocation formula used to distribute tax proceeds between the state and its counties.

### Strategic Goals

In furtherance of this Foundation Principle, the Association will actively pursue the passage of legislation to accomplish the following strategic goals:

● To create a more fair and equitable ad valorem tax system provided it does not eliminate annual reappraisal, reduce tax revenues or increase current exemptions.

● To remove any defects in state tax laws resulting in a discriminatory tax structure provided it eliminates

discrimination without creating new or expanding exemptions or tax credits.

● To ensure there is no cost to local government for use of the ONE SPOT sales tax remittance system.

● To amend Alabama law relating to the enforcement of

## Revenue Protection

### Foundation Principle

Counties are partners with the State of Alabama in the collection of revenue and the delivery of services funded by the collection of such revenue. Many taxes collected by the counties as well as the state are earmarked for distribution between the two levels of government to ensure the provision of





licenses to increase the minimum fine to \$10.00.

**Legislative Policy**

In addition to its strategic goals, the Association has adopted the following legislative policy consistent with this Foundation Principle:



■ Opposition to altering the current interest rate on tax sale proceeds unless such change will not result in a decrease in purchaser participation in tax sales or reduction in tax sale proceeds paid to counties.

■ Support for one uniform standard for the disposition of excess funds held by the county resulting from real estate tax sales.

■ Support for apportioning ad valorem tax collection costs among

all entities entitled to a portion of the proceeds of the tax.

■ Support for modernizing the business licensing process provided it does not result in a loss of state or local revenue or repeal existing local business licensing laws.

■ Opposition to authorizing a local legislative delegation or legislatively-created committees to direct how local revenues should be distributed.

■ Support for the work of the Streamlined Sales and Use Tax Agreement Commission provided there is no effort to repeal or restrict counties' authority to collect, audit and/or enforce local taxes.

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■ Support legislation allowing collection of unpaid debts due the county by other governmental entities by intercepting the entity's portion of ad valorem taxes.

■ Support legislation to clarify that lodging tax applies to rooms rented, whether or not a person actually sleeps in the room.

define the United Way agencies that are eligible for sales tax exemptions.



■ Support the Retail Accountability Act to require wholesalers to report to the Alabama Department of Revenue all sales of tobacco, beer and wine made to retailers.

■ Support amendment of the Taxpayer Bill of Rights to provide that following an audit which uncovers that taxes were wrongly paid to another entity, the auditing entity may take action against the other entity if the wrongly-paid tax is not refunded within 6 months.

■ Support revisions of the definition of tangible personal property to ensure that goods delivered digitally are subject to sales or use tax collections.

■ Support legislation to

■ Oppose legislation that would allow income producing properties to



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be treated as residential housing for the purpose of ad valorem taxation.

## Economic Development & the Alabama Trust Fund

### Foundation Principle

Alabama counties play an ever-growing and vital role in the state's economic development efforts, providing services, financial support and community leadership necessary to attract and retain important employers. Counties must be able to access the revenue necessary to

carry out this function and must be included in any reforms and initiatives that alter Alabama's law regarding economic incentives and requirements. Revenue from the Alabama Trust Fund is essential to meeting these goals and must be protected from unnecessary raids

and expenditures. The Association will actively oppose any removal of revenue from the Alabama Trust Fund and seeks to be a partner in those economic development efforts that emphasize a partnership between the state and its counties.



### Strategic Goals

In furtherance of this Foundation Principle, the Association will actively pursue the passage of legislation to accomplish the following strategic goals:

- To shift 20 percent of the corpus and future oil lease and royalty payments

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of the Alabama Trust Fund into the County and Municipal Government Trust Fund which would thereafter operate as a separately-maintained Trust Fund for counties and municipalities.

**Legislative Policy**

In addition to its strategic goals, the Association has adopted the following legislative policy consistent with this Foundation Principle:

- Opposition to the withdrawal or diversion of money currently earmarked for Alabama Trust Fund.
- Opposition to any economic development legislation or programs that mandate the expenditure of county revenues or abate county taxes without county commission consent.

**Alabama's Prisons and County Jails**

**Foundation Principle**

Alabama's prison system faces a crisis not unlike the crisis duplicated on a daily basis in each of the 67 county jails. The watchful eye of the federal courts, the never-ending expense of providing jail services,

the growing costs of health care and the training and compensation for officers presents a challenge well beyond the reach of a county commission devoid of revenue-generating powers. On the other hand, an efficient local law enforcement agency and jail is necessary to maintain order and to ensure

the safety of all Alabamians. The Association is gravely concerned that all reform efforts, statutory changes or administrative rules be considered only in light of direct, indirect and unintended consequences generated at the county level.

**Strategic Goals**

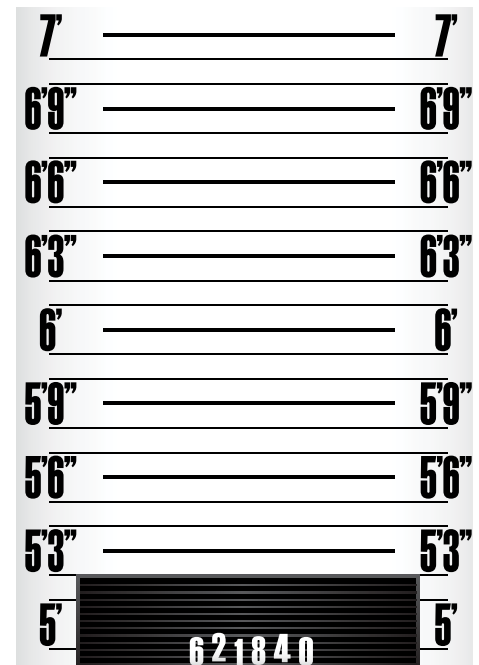
In furtherance of this Foundation Principle, the Association will actively pursue the passage of legislation to accomplish the following strategic goals:

- To clarify that persons on parole, probation or participants in diversion programs are legally and financially state inmates for all purposes even when held for temporary confinement in the county jail or awaiting hearing or transfer to a state facility.
- To amend the Alabama Medicaid law to suspend Medicaid eligibility of individuals in custody of county jails rather than terminating Medicaid benefits.

**Legislative Policy**

In addition to its strategic goals, the Association has adopted the following legislative policy consistent with this Foundation Principle:

- Opposition to requiring mandatory training for sheriffs, sheriffs' deputies, or other county employees without county commission approval.
- Opposition to any prison reform implementation activities that significantly increase costs of or create unsafe conditions in the county jail.
- Support for any legislation necessary to correct any consequences of prison reform implementation that negatively impact the operation of the county jail.
- Opposition to pleading down Class D Felonies for the purposes of convicted persons serving time in county jails.
- Support for providing that non-indigents serving sentences in the county jail be required to pay a portion of the cost of incarceration, including medical expenses.



- Support for U.S. Congress repealing the requirement that persons detained in state or county correctional facilities forfeit their Medicaid benefits immediately upon arrest.
- Opposition to any requirement that county government pay for the use of state inmate labor.
- Opposition to imposing mandated and unfunded jail standards or other procedures.
- Opposition to changing current law providing for feeding of prisoners unless the changes provide that the state pay all costs of feeding prisoners.

- Opposition to legislative or administrative efforts to put reserve deputies in regular law enforcement position.
- Opposition to amending Alabama's work release law to allow wages paid to the county to be expended for purposes other than just the costs of the individual inmate's incarceration.
- Support for comprehensive legislation to clarify and/or implement procedures for county inmates working outside of the jail either through work release or other programs.

## Justice and Public Safety

### Foundation Principle

The State of Alabama is responsible for administration of state courts and public safety agencies and for providing public health and mental health services for the citizens of this state. The Association believes the Alabama Legislature should adequately fund each state agency responsible for delivery of these critical government services and opposes any legislative or administrative efforts that mandate counties to assume any responsibility for

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these state functions or that force county government to assume state functions due to the state's failure to adequately meet its financial or administrative responsibilities. Additionally, since local government plays an important role in providing emergency services at the local level, the Association urges the Legislature to ensure there is adequate funding for local programs and that state and local agencies work in partnership for the safety and well-being of all citizens of this state.

**Strategic Goals**

In furtherance of this Foundation Principle, the Association will

actively pursue the passage of legislation to accomplish the following strategic goals:

- To improve and expand spay-neuter services throughout the state, provided there is no requirement that counties fund such services.
- To provide adequate funding to ensure that ambulance services are available throughout the county.



- To protect the county commission against the payment of any costs or penalties issued as a result of any local elected official defying a validly-issued court order.
- To establish a state-wide uniform pistol permit fee provided that current local laws on distribution are not repealed and all fees are distributed to local government.

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● To amend current Alabama law to create a more equitable financial allocation between local and state governments for the housing, medical care, and transportation of juveniles participating in the juvenile justice system.

### Legislative Policy

In addition to its strategic goals, the Association has adopted the following legislative policy consistent with this Foundation Principle:

■ Support for legislative or administrative procedures to reduce or eliminate county costs for transportation of mental health patients.

■ Opposition to prohibiting state law enforcement officers from conducting investigations or providing other services on county roads.

■ Opposition to any legislation authorizing a person to carry a firearm in a vehicle without a valid pistol permit.

■ Support for shifting regulation of certain prefabricated storm shelters from the Department of Finance to the Alabama Manufactured Housing Commission.

■ Belief that the statewide 911 Board should conduct only those activities delegated by the Legislature.

■ Belief that 911 services are best provided through locally operated and administered boards without statewide coordination and encouraging the statewide 911 Board to seek meaningful input from existing 911 district boards and personnel in developing its recommendations for the long- term plan.

■ Support for adequate funding of state supplements paid to counties with a certified county EMA director.



■ Support for legislative and administrative efforts to implement state-funded video conferencing for certain court appearances and to expand the use of video court proceedings in the state.


■ Belief that debris placed on the right of way of a state road following a disaster event is the State of Alabama's responsibility and should be removed at state expense.

■ Support legislation requiring that a driver's license testing office be open in each county for no less than two days per month.

■ Support authorizing Emergency Management Agency vehicles to utilize emergency lights and sirens as other emergency vehicles.

■ Support legislation to clarify that the County Commission is not liable for the improper expenditures of funds authorized by law to be expended at the "sole

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discretion” of a particular elected official.

■ Support legislation amending Alabama law to remove the requirement that the sheriff must be appointed conservator or guardianship of an incapacitated person if no other suitable person qualifies as general conservator.

■ Support for legislation imposing an express duty to require service providers to collect and remit the monthly statewide 911 fee from all of their applicable customers, and



further authorize the statewide 911 Board to take audit and collection actions, as necessary, to enforce such collections.

■ Support for technical amendment allowing the statewide 911 Board to expend administrative funds to support the funding of next generation technology projects.

system. The Association believes it is essential that the county commission have adequate federal, state, and/or local funding to meet the many needs of its rural transportation system. Additionally, the Association believes that, in order to keep roads and bridges properly maintained for the safety and well-being of the traveling public, the county commission must have broad regulatory authority related to the use of county-maintained roads and bridges, including the ability to collect reimbursement from persons or entities causing damage to those roads and bridges.

**Strategic Goals**

In furtherance of this Foundation Principle, the Association will actively pursue the passage of legislation to accomplish the following strategic goals:

- To provide adequate funding of road and bridge projects, provided counties receive an equitable portion of funding utilizing the current gas tax formula.

**Rural Transportation**

**Foundation Principle**

The county commission is responsible for proper construction, maintenance, and repair of all roads and bridges in the county road

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● To establish the Alabama Transportation Rehabilitation and Improvement Program 2 (ATRIP-2) providing a \$1.2 billion bond issue for the rehabilitation and improvement of county and municipal roads and bridges.



● To amend the Alabama bid law to exempt the repair of brand name equipment by the factory-authorized dealer.

### Legislative Policy

In addition to its strategic goals, the Association has adopted the following legislative policy consistent with this Foundation Principle:

■ Support for allowing the county commission to call a local referendum to impose a renewable temporary local gasoline and motor fuel tax to fund specified local road and bridge projects.

■ Opposition to any measures, including budget appropriations, which would divert taxes currently earmarked for roads and bridges to other state functions.

■ Opposition to reducing the current level of federal or state funding for county road and bridge projects.

■ Opposition to weakening Alabama's law related to weight or axle-spacing restrictions on state

and county roads or to add new exemptions to such laws.

■ Support for providing that fines collected from persons convicted of driving overweight vehicles on county roads and bridges be distributed to the county's road and bridge fund.

■ Opposition to establishing a commission to administer the Alabama Department of Transportation. Opposition to any changes to current law setting speed

limits on unposted county roads.

■ Support for amending current motor fuel and gasoline tax statutes to include taxation of any alternative fuels utilized to propel any motorized vehicle.

■ Support for amending Alabama's severance

tax law to ensure that counties receive proceeds sufficient to ensure proper maintenance and repair of roads and bridges utilized for the transportation of materials severed within the county.

■ Support amending the Alabama Public Works Law to exempt the awarding of annual in-place contracts for the paving and resurfacing of county roads. ■



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# Tips for Effective Communication with Legislators

## 1. Talk to your lawmakers.

Contacting your legislators six times a year by letter, phone, email, or office visit makes you more active than 99.9% of all citizens, and therefore 99.9% more effective.

**2. Lose gracefully.** No matter what the outcome, always write a thank-you note to the lawmaker. Never burn bridges; your adversary on one issue may be your ally on the next.

**3. Be a teacher.** A great way to describe the importance of an issue to your lawmaker is to show him or her up close and personal. Invite your lawmaker to your office or an appropriate space to discuss the issue and to answer any questions that they may have. Most state lawmakers are not full time and value any opportunity to learn about an issue.

**4. Be flexible.** Compromises are often necessary. Evaluate what you can realistically achieve now, and work on the rest later. Be patient and remember that some decisions may take months.



## 5. Give and take.

Responsibility from you and commitment from your lawmaker go hand-in-hand. The more responsibility you assume, the more support you can expect from your lawmaker.

## 6. There's power in

**numbers.** This is true for financial support as well as communication. Remind your lawmaker of how many people in your organization share your opinion.

**7. Reach out.** Include your lawmaker on mailing lists for county newsletters, and make sure that you are on their mailing lists as well.

**8. Ask questions.** Ask your lawmaker to state their position, and if it aligns with yours, ask what you can do to strengthen and garner support. If their position is different than yours, ask what information and show of support would be necessary to change that position.

**9. Use examples.** Explain the logic of your position in terms that are relatable- jobs, cost, how many people will be affected, etc. Have detailed information you can give to explain yourself. In all communications, be sure to include the bill number and/or name of the legislation or regulations, as well as your name, postal and email addresses, and home and office phone numbers.

**10. Think 15 minutes.** Get to your point fast and stay focused. ■

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