

# COUNTY COMMISSION

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Volume 56, Number 2

LOGGING  
NOTIFICATIONS

RETIREMENT  
SYSTEMS  
OF ALABAMA

ALABAMA  
TRUST  
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LOCAL  
TAXATION

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### 84th Annual Convention



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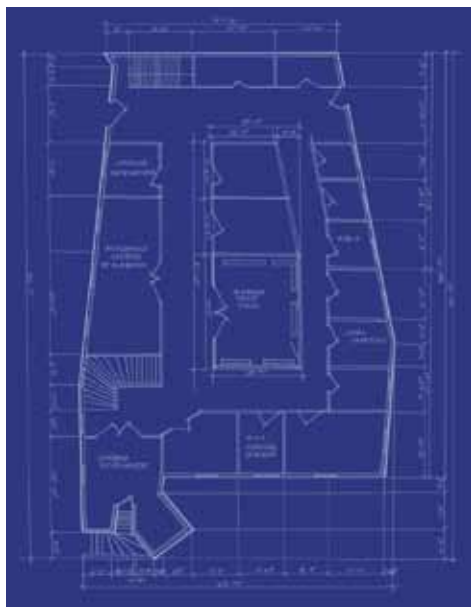
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VOLUME 56, NUMBER 2



*Come to ACCA's 84th Annual convention to help your county develop a "Blueprint for Change"*



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*Hon. Tim Choate  
President*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim Choate".

## ONE voice of county government is being heard

*From Montgomery to  
Washington, D.C., leaders are  
learning that Alabama's counties  
know how to work together*

Looks like our “branding” project is moving along just fine, thank you.

During our trip to the NACo Legislative Conference, I found myself in the Senate Dirksen Office Building in Washington, D.C.

And our efforts were the subject of unexpected discussion.

“I noticed that your materials now have the phrase “67 Counties, ONE Voice,” U.S. Rep. Terri Sewell said as she began remarks at the Association’s annual Congressional Breakfast.

“And that’s what we are also trying to do up here in D.C. – represent you with ONE voice. But there are only nine of us, not 67.

And I can tell you from experience that ACCA speaks with ONE voice both here and back home.”

Of course the “nine” she referenced were the seven members of the U.S. House and the two Senators from Alabama.

But her recognition of our message is exactly what this campaign is about.

Perhaps she noticed the new written theme because she has a history with our Association, having served as a county attorney before her election.

Some might say U.S. Reps. Mike Rogers and Mo Brooks know a little bit about the ONE voice from their service as county commissioners before moving to Washington.

Certainly their colleague Rep. Jo Bonner is familiar with the ONE voice as well – his dad was chairman of the Wilcox County Commission and he attended the Association’s conventions as a youngster.

Or perhaps we’re putting our written goal into action in such a way that folks

outside our organization are noticing our collective efforts.

I definitely got a sense of our unity during my trips around the state for the ACCA District Meetings.

I wouldn’t take anything for that opportunity to travel and meet commissioners and county staff leaders from all over the state.

What astonishes me to this day is not the differences between Etowah and Sumter, or Lawrence and Conecuh – but the similarities in the challenges we each face in our home counties that we love so dearly.

That’s why “67 counties, ONE voice” is so important, and why it works.

Throughout the legislative session, I was proud of the way our counties stepped up and pulled together.

When legislation threatened our ability to take care of our citizens, we made ourselves heard – and it made a difference, time and again.

Not only were we strong on defense, but we also succeeded on offense – successfully promoting several bills to strengthen and improve county government, with new laws to stabilize the future of 9-1-1 services, resolve subdivision regulation conflicts with cities and boost enforcement of existing property, deed and severance taxes.

I truly believe it is more than just a phrase and a new logo.

It is a philosophy that ties us together, increasing the chances that we can succeed in these troubling times.

When Gov. Robert Bentley announced what will be the largest road and bridge construction program in our state’s history, some might have expected our ONE voice to break.

## I truly believe it is more than just a phrase and a new logo. It is a philosophy that ties us together, increasing the chances that we can succeed in these troubling times.

Of course I'm talking about ATRIP, the Alabama Transportation Rehabilitation and Improvement Program.

Unlike previous programs, this \$1 billion initiative is competitive with projects selected based on the impact on safety, economic development, education and quality of life.

Because the projects are competitively selected, one might expect Alabama counties to close ranks and work in secret.

After all, the competitive selection process will almost certainly produce some winners and some losers.

This means any help offered to your neighbor could, ultimately, hurt your own chances.

The response has been exactly the opposite.

Almost from the first moment the program was unveiled, county engineers and commissioners began to offer assistance to each other.

Advice on plan development, answers to questions, and insight into financing have flowed – with ONE voice – from one end of this state to another.

As this program moves forward, our willingness to work together will be even more important as counties need expertise and advice from their neighbors.

With ATRIP slated to provide \$1 billion in funding for roads and bridges at the local level, the workload throughout Alabama will be enough to keep us all busy.

Just the other day our executive director attended a meeting of our commission and presented a plaque that now hangs in our commission chamber.

The plaque bears a copy of our new logo and recognizes the year I have been honored to serve as your president.

In the years ahead, those who attend our meetings will see the new logo and be reminded of our pledge to work with one goal – and one voice – to improve the services that benefit our citizens.

Long after they have forgotten “Tim Choate’s year” as president, our message will speak clearly about the Association’s new focus that began this year.

During that morning in D.C., I was struck by yet another signal of our ONE voice.

Almost a dozen county emergency management directors were on hand to coordinate the breakfast, welcome the members of Congress and their staff, and to spread their message of better federal support of and response to disasters.

The group left their Virginia hotel at 6 a.m. to be a part of the event.

Without their efforts, the breakfast would not have been a success.

The fruits of their labors in Washington – improved emergency management – will only serve to improve our response on the local level.

And, working together, we are ensuring that our ONE voice is gaining just the kind of attention we had hoped.

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*Sonny Brasfield*  
*Executive Director*

*Sonny Brasfield*

## 9-1-1 directors avoid disaster, show true leadership

Emergency communication  
funding stabilized for years to  
come thanks to foresight of  
Alabama Association of 9-1-1  
Districts

In this business, it is sometimes very difficult to avoid the overriding desire to focus only on crisis management.

After all, government these days often seems more motivated by cleaning up after a wreck than by taking the steps necessary to avoid one.

That's why the decisions of our 9-1-1 community back in the summer of 2010 have been so gratifying.

For the last few years, those with the resources to look into the future of communication have worried about the funding model currently used in Alabama to finance the operation of the 9-1-1 program.

Despite the worries, not a single 9-1-1 program in our state has been closed nor have any services been reduced.

Without disaster knocking on the front door, the expected response would have been for the 9-1-1 directors to reject the idea of working on real change.

"Hey," most folks in government would have said, "call me back when it really gets bad."

But when faced with the choice of either ignoring the signs of impending disaster or working toward a solution, the 9-1-1 districts elected to look into the future for a possible solution that was clouded with significant difficulties and unpleasant political pressures.

The core of the problem is that Alabama's essential 9-1-1 programs are funded with two sources of revenue – a statewide fee on wireless communication devices that is divided based on population and then a local fee on so-called "land line" service that is established by the local 9-1-1 board.

This local fee was at one time the lifeblood of all 9-1-1 programs.

With the popularity of wireless phones soaring on a daily basis, revenue from the

fees on local land line phones has steadily diminished.

Today, many districts have local fees of more than \$3 per month, with the average almost certain to go to about \$5 or so within the next few years.

As the number of traditional land line customers diminishes on a daily basis, increasing the monthly fee is necessary just to keep revenue at a steady level.

Left unattended, this trend will very soon threaten the ability of our state's rural counties to provide essential 9-1-1 communication services.

This shift will hit the more populous areas as well, but the pressure won't be felt in urban Alabama until services in the rural areas have been crippled, if not terminated.

So with this background, in 2010 one of the Association's affiliate organizations – the Alabama Association of 9-1-1 Districts – formulated a detailed policy on the establishment of a statewide, flat 9-1-1 fee on all communication devices capable of accessing 9-1-1 services in Alabama.

The policy was embraced by the appropriate ACCA steering committee, the board of directors and, eventually, the ACCA membership.

Once adopted, the policy placed the Association in a unique position: we found ourselves supporting legislation that repeals the ability to levy local 9-1-1 fees.

In exchange there will be a state-established rate producing revenue distributed by a formula to ensure level funding for all districts.

The approach could be criticized for conflicting with one of the cornerstones of the ACCA's policy – important decisions should be made at the LOCAL level and not in Montgomery.

Holding on to that policy while embracing

## In the end, however, the districts have advocated for a new funding model that leaves local operational decisions at the local level, but shifts the revenue focus to a statewide view.

the reality that the major “train wreck” of 9-1-1 funding isn’t here just yet would have been the easy way out.

After all, a financial disaster has not occurred and the Association could wait to deal with the fallout at that time.

But it was gratifying to see these local directors reach a consensus on an initiative that is forward looking and is in the best interest of all districts.

The agreement didn’t come without give and take, or without disagreements.

In the end, however, the districts have advocated for a new funding model that leaves local operational decisions at the local level, but shifts the revenue focus to a statewide view.

The governor signed the bill into law May 8, and the bill – now known as Act 2012-293 – is a testimony to local government in Alabama swimming upstream in today’s world while most other governmental groups simply fight to protect the status quo.

Today, and for much of the next 15 months, 9-1-1 directors will be busy.

Implementing this new act will require an evaluation of the income and operational details for each district and the calculation of the new statewide rate.

This process will be coordinated by a statewide board of 13 persons, including seven 9-1-1 directors.

The first of these directors to serve on the new board will be elected on July 10 at a day-long 9-1-1 workshop that will include more give-and-take from a group that has gotten experienced in making tough decisions during the last year or so.

Will this new law signal the end of significant reform of our 9-1-1 system?

Probably not. The long-term viability of 88 separate stand-alone 9-1-1 programs

in today’s economic and technical world is less than rosy.

Most folks believe we should expect to be back at the “reform” drawing board on operational issues sometime in the next decade or so.

And before anyone starts thinking we shouldn’t be looking that far into the future, you need to spend a few minutes with the leadership of our 9-1-1 programs.

They’ve got their arms firmly around the concept of crisis avoidance.

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Mary E. Pons  
Association Counsel

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary E. Pons".

## Alabama Supreme Court interprets open meetings law

Montgomery school board's  
'serial meetings' narrowly  
avoided being unlawful

The Supreme Court of Alabama has issued what I believe is its first ruling on the open meetings law enacted in 2005. It is an interesting, albeit confusing, opinion, but as someone who spent hours negotiating the definition of "meeting" for the legislation which would become the law, I do think that the court got it right – mostly. Some don't agree, with at least one paper commenting the court had "gutted" the law. I strongly disagree with that assessment, but it does appear the justices have raised new questions about proper application of aspects of the law. And I fear they may have generated a movement to once again amend or rewrite this law.

The case involves several "gatherings" of members of the Montgomery County Board of Education. One such gathering of members at a social function was pretty readily dismissed by the court from any claim that this was a meeting. The testimony in the case indicated there was no "deliberation" by members of the board at this gathering, even though several of them gathered together at the function. At one point, there was a quorum of the body in the same location, but one person left when they realized that fact. The court ruled that since there was no deliberation, there was no meeting and hence, no violation. The court did not address the fact that the law very clearly allows members of a body to gather at a social function or conference without violating the law as long as members do not deliberate. I would have liked them to make that point – even a quorum can be together as long as they are not deliberating. At least the justices properly addressed the issue of deliberation.

The second part of the opinion is much more confusing – and really the part that county commissioners should carefully consider. The president of the board scheduled three separate meetings of "groups" of board members to discuss with the superintendent her goals and objectives for the school district. A report of these meetings would then be discussed at the next school board meeting. No public notice of these meetings was given.

The plaintiff in this case argued that each of these gatherings was a violation of the law, because they were intended as "serial meetings" to circumvent the law. He maintained that they were "in substance and essence" one meeting of the board and asked the court for a "liberal construction" of the term "meeting" to reach this conclusion. In an amicus brief, the Alabama Press Association agreed. The court did not. Instead, the court determined that the law was clear and unambiguous regarding what constitutes a "meeting" and that since each of the three possible ways in which a meeting of the body existed required of a quorum, there could be no conclusion that a gathering of less than a quorum constituted a meeting. This part of the ruling is very satisfying. There is no question that the definition of a "meeting" requires a quorum. This was clearly the intent of the Legislature – even the most "liberal construction" of the statute cannot logically maintain otherwise.

If this was the extent of the ruling, this would be a simple case. However, the plaintiff in this case argued in the alternative that these three gatherings set by the board president were, in fact, committee meetings, and that each



**I'm not sure what the fallout from this opinion will be, but my advice to counties is to continue to very carefully follow the provisions of the open meetings law and avoid use of committees to circumvent either the letter or the spirit of the law.**

committee was subject to the notice and open meeting provisions of the law. After much analysis, the court determined that these “groups” were, in fact, committees of the body and therefore, subject to the notice and meeting provisions. If these groups were committees, that determination is correct. Under *Code of Alabama 1975, § 36-25A-2(4)*, a governmental body includes “all standing, special, or advisory committees or subcommittees of, or appointed by, the body.” Therefore, the plaintiff, in my opinion, is correct that any committee conducting a meeting must give notice and conduct meetings in public. In this case, however, the Supreme Court determined that the discussions held by these groups did not constitute committee meetings as that term is defined in the law.

Under the open meetings law, there are three types of “gatherings” that constitute a meeting: (1) the “regular” meeting of the body; (2) a prearranged gathering in which the body can exercise its powers or approve expenditures; and (3) a gathering, prearranged or not, where the body deliberates specific matters it expects to come before the body, committee, or subcommittee at a later date.

It is this third clause that the court focused on in its opinion, and it is this part of the opinion that is confusing. The school board’s position was that the committees were to meet with the superintendent and then report to the full board at its next meeting where deliberation would take place. The court held that since there was no intent for the

matters to “come before” the committee at a later date, there was no violation of the law. In essence, the case turned on the fact that these committees were not separately deliberating or voting – that would only occur at the “full” board meeting.

Two dissents disagreed and argued that the intent of the law was that if the matters were to be discussed at either a later committee meeting **or** at a meeting of the full body, a meeting was held if there was deliberation. Of course, this was the position of the plaintiff as well.

I’m not sure what the fallout from this opinion will be, but my advice to counties

is to continue to very carefully follow the provisions of the open meetings law and avoid use of committees to circumvent either the letter or the spirit of the law. As noted earlier, I am pleased the court recognized that the “clear and unambiguous” definition of “meeting” requires a quorum and deliberation and that it refused to expand the law beyond that clear intent. However, it appears that the proper interpretation of notice and meeting requirements for committees under the law will be the subject of further debate and court action. I personally would like to believe that those future cases will involve school boards and not county commissions.

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# New state laws to benefit counties

Five bills introduced on behalf of the Association of County Commissions of Alabama became law this year, including an overhaul of 9-1-1 funding that had been in negotiation for two years. Other new laws will clear up confusion over subdivision regulations and improve enforcement of existing taxes on deeds, property and certain severed materials.

"The one voice of Alabama's counties definitely made an impact at the State House this year, whether we were promoting something we believed would improve county government or fighting something that threatened it," said ACCA Executive Director Sonny Brasfield. "The hard work of county leaders and the ACCA staff clearly paid off."

During the legislative session, ACCA tracked hundreds of bills, amended dozens pieces of legislation to protect county interests and blocked numerous "Danger Bills."

A more detailed legislative report that includes all bills affecting county government plus local bills is available online at [www.alabamacounties.org/?p=2524](http://www.alabamacounties.org/?p=2524). What follows is an overview of the five ACCA bills that became law.



**Sen. Irons**



**Rep. McCutcheon**

### Proper payment of deed and recording taxes

*Act 2012-494*

*(SB 216 Tammy Irons & Mac McCutcheon)*

This act will ensure proper payment of deed and recording taxes by requiring the buyer to submit proof of the property's value. It calls for the Department of Revenue to create a form that will be submitted showing the actual price paid or actual value of the property. If the buyer does not present the form, the tax appraisal will be used. The act creates a penalty for anyone who intentionally fails to provide proof of the purchase price paid or actual value. It is effective Aug. 1. This new law is expected to generate an increase in recording fee revenue with counties receiving a third of the proceeds.



**Rep. J. Williams**



**Sen. Dunn**

### Tax exemptions for elderly and disabled

*Act 2012-313*

*(HB 120 Jack Williams & Priscilla Dunn)*

This act makes uniform the existing property tax exemptions for low-income elderly and disabled. To qualify for these exemptions of both state and local taxes, the income threshold will be \$12,000 per household. This change will close a loophole that had allowed some elderly or disabled taxpayers whose spouses had healthy incomes to qualify for these exemptions. The act also puts the state Department of Revenue in charge of developing criteria and proof necessary for the disability exemption. It is effective Aug. 1 and should also positively impact counties because of the changes to the exemptions for those who are disabled.



**Rep. Millican**



**Sen. Marsh**

### 9-1-1 funding

*Act 2012-293*

*(HB 89 Mike Millican & Del Marsh)*

This act, which was developed after two years of negotiations, will establish a statewide 9-1-1 service charge intended to adequately fund the state's 9-1-1 districts. It also alters the makeup and duties of the statewide 9-1-1 coordinating board. The effective dates for this act are staggered,

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# News You Can Use

with portions becoming effective on May 8, 2012; Sept. 1, 2012; and Oct. 1, 2013. The new flat, statewide fee that will fund each 9-1-1 district in Alabama is not effective until Oct. 1, 2013. In the meantime, each district will continue to collect its local fee on landline phones.



**Sen. Sanford**



**Rep. McMillan**

## **Subdivision regulations within jurisdiction of municipal planning commission**

*Act 2012-297*

*(SB 236 Paul Sanford & Steve McMillan)*

This act will ensure that subdivision regulations are enforced where a city's planning jurisdiction stretches outside city limits, which means that subdivision roads will be built to proper standards. The new law says that in unincorporated areas, county subdivision regulations apply in the planning jurisdiction unless one of two things occurs. Either the county and city can agree for the city to be responsible, or the city can trump the county's authority as long as it complies with certain requirements. It only applies in counties that have adopted subdivision regulations, and it is effective Oct. 1.

## **Severance tax on sand and gravel**

*Act 2012-318*

*(HB 364 Elwyn Thomas/Steve McMillan & Gerald Allen)*

This act will boost enforcement of the existing severance tax by requiring the



**Rep. Thomas**



**Sen. Allen**

Department of Revenue to provide counties with information about entities paying the tax. It also makes technical corrections sought by the quarry industry, such as addressing situations where the tax should be paid by the business selling the finished product rather than the company selling the raw material and providing specific guidance for the taxing of product that is sold without ever being transported on public roads. It is effective Oct. 1.

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# Former commissioner returns to State House

Rep. Jim Carns spent one four-year term on the Jefferson County Commission, but he says “came back home” when he won back his former seat in the Alabama House of Representatives.

Greg Canfield had held the seat, but left the Legislature to become Gov. Robert Bentley’s secretary of commerce, a position formerly known as director of the Alabama Development Office.

Carns was elected to the open seat in a special election last August.

“Rep. Carns was very close to this Association during his first tenure in the Alabama Legislature. We often relied on him – especially in his position on the House Rules Committee – to support our efforts on behalf of counties. Perhaps his exposure to county government during those years was a factor in his decision to run for the county commission,” said Sonny Brasfield, Association of County Commissions of Alabama executive director. “Now that he is back in the House, the insight he gained from two decades in public office is an asset that can only benefit the legislative process.”

An industrial engineer who graduated from the University of Alabama, Carns describes himself as a retired businessman. He sold his business manufacturing stainless steel tubing in 2005. Currently his legislative district is primarily in Jefferson County (Mountain Brook, Vestavia Hills and the U.S. 280 corridor), but he also has part of northern Shelby County.

Carns had represented House District 48 for 16 years – four terms – before he won a seat on his county commission. “I saw a couple of things where I thought I could move the ball forward,” he said of the decision.

He served only one term on the county commission before deciding not to seek re-election in 2010. He served during an extremely challenging time, which continues today as the current members of the Jefferson County Commission



*Rep. Jim Carns, a former Jefferson County Commissioner, is back in the Alabama Legislature*

*Photo: Clay Redden.*

struggle to find legislative support for a solution for the financially strained sewer system and a general fund budget ravaged by the loss of revenue from an improperly enacted occupational tax.

“It was very interesting, and I enjoyed it,” said Carns. “We did all we could do under very difficult conditions.”

Now that he has returned to state government, he says the experience at the local level will benefit his service in Montgomery. “I have a great deal of appreciation and respect for the

## County Caucus

### Former county commissioners in the Alabama Legislature

Rep. George Bandy  
Lee

Rep. Jim Carns  
Jefferson

Rep. Joe Faust  
Baldwin

Rep. Berry Forte  
Barbour

Rep. Steve Hurst  
Talladega

Rep. John Knight  
Montgomery

Rep. Lesley Vance  
Russell

Rep. Randy Wood  
Calhoun

commissioners all over the state and the Association,” Carns said. But, he acknowledges that the problems he faced during his short tenure on the Jefferson County Commission exposed him to a “totally different set of problems than” are faced by other counties.

Carns now serves as on the Insurance and Jefferson County Legislation committees.



**CATHERINE HUFF**

*President*

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# ACCA puts twist on 'home rule' conversation

Alabama's Constitutional Revision Commission is preparing to take up local government issues, and the Association of County Commissions of Alabama has made recommendations that take a different look at "home rule."

"We don't expect this group to focus on the traditional matters of home rule – taxing authority or planning and zoning," said ACCA Executive Director Sonny Brasfield.

With those divisive topics off the table, another and perhaps even more fundamental issue came to light.

"The thing that is most broken in Montgomery is the local legislation process," said Brasfield. "County government is not going to be

significantly more effective if we don't change the way we talk about local legislation."

At the State House, local legislation gets special treatment in several different ways. For starters, local laws are largely exempt from the legislative process because they cannot be changed or revised in any way after they are advertised.

Then with the Legislature's traditions of "local courtesy," an individual legislator has enormous influence over what passes or fails. For a county with a large delegation, a single legislator can block something that has support from the majority of the delegation. Counties with small delegations may have the opposite problem – they

are at the mercy of whatever a single legislator can pass.

Another issue comes into play with constitutional amendments affecting a single county. At present, if any legislator votes against the proposed constitutional amendment, it is subject to a statewide vote, even if it is a purely local issue affecting only one county.

In response to these issues, the ACCA board of directors approved a set of recommendations in January, which were then presented to the revision commission. Highlights of the recommendations are:

- Amending the constitutional provision on unfunded mandates,



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# News You Can Use

- Amending the process for advertising and amending local bills,
- Establishing local approval for certain local laws,
- Exercising certain interim powers, subject to legislative repeal,

- Amending the process for holding local referendums on local constitutional amendments.

To see details of ACCA's recommendations, please visit [www.alabamacounties.org/?p=1749](http://www.alabamacounties.org/?p=1749).

The Constitutional Revision Commission was created by a joint legislative resolution in 2011. Former Gov. Albert Brewer chairs the 16-member, bipartisan panel composed of both legislators and citizens.

At its June meeting, the revision commission appointed a subcommittee on the local government section of the legislative article. This commission is working through the state's governing document on an article-by-article basis, and the only major reform of Alabama's 1901 Constitution came when the judicial article was rewritten in 1973.

Birmingham attorney Greg Butrus, who is heading up the local government subcommittee, agreed that the issue of home rule is much broader than people initially think. "The Legislature encouraged everyone to steer away from tax issues," he said, referring to the resolution that created the revision commission. But "there's a lot out there that people may not think of."

At press time, the subcommittee had not developed a detailed timeline for its work, though Butrus said he would like to hear again from experts such as ACCA.

During the 2012 Regular Session of the Alabama Legislature, lawmakers approved the revision commission's rewrites of two articles, Article XII Private Corporations and Article XIII Banking. The pair will be on the Nov. 6 general election ballot along with a number of other amendments.

These articles have been in development for years and are noncontroversial, said Mary E. Pons, ACCA's Association counsel. "The discussion at the revision commission's meeting was that the fate of these two articles at the ballot box will really determine the momentum for this work going forward," she said.

Most likely the earliest the local government provisions could go on the ballot would be November 2014.

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# Blueprint for change

*Counties that plan now will be ahead of the game*

The wind of change is blowing through Alabama, and counties are not immune to the shifts. Fortunately county leaders can plan ahead and formulate a Blueprint for Change, which will put them in a better position to respond to future demands.

That's why the Association of County Commissions of Alabama is bringing county leaders together to help you prepare to develop your county's Blueprint for Change, which is the theme for the 2012 Annual Convention.

"We can anticipate many of the changes that are coming down the road for counties, and we are working to help you get ready to adapt and adjust successfully," said Sonny Brasfield, ACCA's executive director.

So, how would you draw your county's blueprint? Start by going to [www.alabamacounties.org](http://www.alabamacounties.org) to register for the convention, which is Aug. 21-23 at the Perdido Beach Resort in Orange Beach.

Early registration is available for \$185 before July 27.

Late registration costs \$210, and the deadline for refunds is Aug. 3.

To reserve a room at the Perdido Beach Resort, either visit





# From the Cover

www.perdido beachresort.com or call 800-634-8001. A group code is available to secure a rate of \$150 per night for a standard room. The deadline for making hotel reservations is July 20.

For questions about convention registration or room reservations, please contact Donna Key or Jennifer Datcher in the ACCA office at 334-263-7594.

A full agenda is available on pages 18-19 of this magazine. What follows are descriptions of some of the key sessions.

## Blueprint for Change:

### Financial Status of RSA and Retirement Changes

Bill Kelley, the Retirement Systems of Alabama's Director of ERS Benefits, will be on hand Aug. 22. Though news reports may vary, "The Retirement System is financially sound," Kelley said. In fact, recently released research shows RSA's investments in Alabama have a significant positive benefit for Alabama's economy.

"A lot of the tax revenue governmental entities have enjoyed is due to RSA's investments," he said.

**Speaker:** Bill Kelley, director of ERS benefits at the Retirement Systems of Alabama

**Topic:** "Blueprint for Change: Financial Status of RSA and Retirement Changes"

**Date:** Aug. 22

**Time:** 9:45 a.m.

plan than we currently have, but it's still a defined benefit plan, which was important to us," he said.

Looking too far ahead is difficult because so much of what RSA does is governed by the Alabama Legislature, but he did say there is one change some counties could consider in the future. Many counties still have the option of increasing what employees contribute toward their own retirement from 5 percent to 7.5 percent. The Legislature granted that flexibility, and the majority of counties stayed at 5 percent, he said.

"That's something counties may be looking at as a cost savings," Kelley said, "but it is not popular with employees."

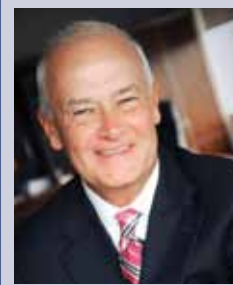
## Blueprint for Change:

### Economic Development

These days Bill Taylor heads up the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama, but he is perhaps best known for his years as president and CEO of Mercedes-Benz U.S. International. He came to Alabama in 1993 to help with the start-up of the Vance plant, and over the years his efforts grew to helping recruit new industry.

On the subject of change, Kelley said there is a new retirement plan for public employees who start work on or after Jan. 1. "It's a less generous retirement

Taylor's remarks on Aug. 22 will help counties understand their role in the state's push for growth, which has had two major changes recently. First, last



**Speaker:** Bill Taylor, president, Economic Development Partnership of Alabama

**Topic:** "Blueprint for Change: Economic Development"

**Date:** Aug. 22

**Time:** 11 a.m..

summer the governor created by executive order the Alabama Economic Development Alliance, which is composed of education and economic development leaders from around the state. Secondly, the alliance produced

a strategic plan called "Accelerate Alabama." (Executive summary available at [www.bitly.com/accelal](http://www.bitly.com/accelal).)

"The state is a beneficiary of a top-down and bottom-up strategic approach to economic development. This is going to be vital to our future success as we navigate issues prevalent on a national level such as workforce availability and labor skills," Taylor said. "Having K-12 at the table with higher education and the economic development community allows us to take a holistic approach towards these challenges."

Communities could benefit from an approach like the one that created the alliance, Taylor said. "Local

*continued on p. 21*



# 2012 Convention Agenda

ACCA 84th Annual Convention

August 21-23, 2012

Perdido Beach Resort, Orange Beach, Ala.



## Monday, August 20

**1 p.m.**

Golf Tournament (*Lunch at Noon*)  
Glenlakes Golf Club in Foley, Ala.

**1 - 7 p.m.**

Fishing Expedition  
Reel Surprise Charter Docks

## Tuesday, August 21

**9 a.m. - 5 p.m.**

Affiliate Meetings

- 9 a.m.  
ACEA Board Meeting
- 10 a.m.  
ACEA Membership Meeting
- 1 p.m.  
ACAA Membership Meeting
- 3 p.m.  
AAND Membership Meeting
- 4 p.m.  
AAEM Membership Meeting

**11 a.m. - 5 p.m.**

Registration Desk Open

**11 a.m. - 7 p.m.**

Exhibit Showcase

**11 a.m. - Noon**

ACCA Board of Directors Meeting

**12 - 1 p.m.**

Strolling Lunch in the Exhibit Hall

**1 - 5 p.m.**

CROAA Education Meeting

- Safety in the Field, *Johnny Howell, License Inspector, Morgan County*
- Exchange of Information Among County Departments to Maximize Revenue, *Betty Peterson, Madison County Sales Tax Director*
- Streamline Requirements for Alabama, *Mark Culver, Houston County Commission Chairman*
- CROAA Business Session

**2 - 3 p.m.**

ACCA Workers Compensation and Liability Insurance Funds Meeting

**5 - 6:30 p.m.**

Opening Reception in the Exhibit Hall

## Wednesday, August 22

**7:30 - 8:30 a.m.**

Convention Breakfast

**7:45 - 8:30 a.m.**

Nominating Committee Meeting  
Resolutions Committee Meeting

**8 - 11:30 a.m.**

Registration Desk Open

**8:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.**

Opening General Session

- Blueprint for Change: State Perspective, *Gov. Robert Bentley (invited)*
- Blueprint for Change: Alabama Trust

Fund, *Young Boozer, State Treasurer*

- Blueprint for Change: Financial Status of RSA and Retirement Changes, *Bill Kelley, Director of ERS Benefits, Retirement Systems of Alabama*
- Blueprint for Change: Efficiency in Government, *Sen. Del Marsh (invited)*
- Blueprint for Change: Economic Development, *Bill Taylor, Economic Development Partnership of Alabama*
- Remarks from NACo President Chris Rodgers
- Report of the ACCA Nominating Committee

**12 - 1:15 p.m.**

County Agents Kitchen Lunch

**1:30 - 4:45 p.m.**

Concurrent Sessions

- Keeping Your Eye on Your County Jail, *Choctaw County Probate Judge D'Wayne May*
- Changes in Alabama's Sentencing Guidelines, *Bennett Wright, Alabama Sentencing Commission*
- National Weather Service Warning Process, *Jim Stefkovich, Meteorologist, National Weather Service*
- Training Doctors for Rural Alabama, *Dr. Will Baker, Executive Director, Ala. Medical Education Consortium*

# 2012 Convention Agenda

ACCA 84th Annual Convention

August 21-23, 2012

Perdido Beach Resort, Orange Beach, Ala.



- Immigration Reform Status Report, *Mary Pons, ACCA Association Counsel*
- Future of Local Tax Collection, *Sonny Brasfield, ACCA Executive Director*

## Thursday, August 23

7:45 - 8:45 a.m.

County Agents Kitchen Breakfast

8:45 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Breakout Sessions

### Commissioners and Administrators Combined Breakout Session (before the break)

- Changes in Mental Health, *Commissioner, ADMH (invited)*
- Funding Crisis in Juvenile Justice, *Walter Wood, Executive Director, Alabama Dept. of Youth services*

### Commissioners and Engineers Combined Breakout Session (after the break)

- Implementation of the Logging Notification Act, *Sonny Brasfield, ACCA Executive Director and Richie Beyer, Elmore County Engineer (Combined with Engineers)*

### Engineers Breakout Session (before the break)

- County Transportation Status Report, *Ed Phillips, County Transportation Bureau Chief, ALDOT*

- Who is Regulating Subdivisions?, *Mary Pons, ACCA Association Counsel*
- Erosion Control for Roadway and Bridge Projects, *Skip Powe, Assistant Bureau Chief, Environment & Technology, ALDOT*

### Administrators Breakout Session (after the break)

- Excess Money in Tax Sales, *Mary Pons, ACCA Association Counsel*
- County Drug Card Program, *Ron Howard, Coast2Coast*
- Election Reimbursement, *Rep. Randy Wood (invited)*
- Examiners Report, *Teresa Durrett, Department of Examiners*

### AAEM Breakout Session (before the break)

- Inspecting Storm Shelters, *Art Faulkner, Director, AEMA*
- State EMA Update

### AAND Breakout Session (before the break)

- Overview and Implementation of Act 2012-293, *Sonny Brasfield, ACCA Executive Director and Sallie Gowan, ACCA Dir. of Communications*
- ANGEN Update, *Roger Wilson, Walker County 9-1-1 Director*
- Reporting Requirements for Act 2012-293, *Teresa Durrett, Dept. of Examiners of Public Accounts*

### CROAA Breakout Session (before the break)

- Briefing from ADOR and Tax Payer Bill of Rights, *ADOR Commissioner Julie Magee*
- Business License Reform, *Joe Garrett, ADOR*

### AAEM, AAND, and CROAA Combined Breakout Session (after the break)

- Dealing with Difficult People and Resolving Conflict in Your Job, *Stan Windham and Chris McClendon, Ala. Cooperative Extension System*

12 - 1:15 p.m.

Convention Luncheon Honoring 2011-2012 President Tim Choate

1:30 - 4:45 p.m.

Afternoon General Session

- ATRIP Status Briefing, *John Cooper, Director, ALDOT, Ed Austin, Innovative Programs Bureau Chief, ALDOT*
- Awards Ceremony
- ACCA Business Session
- Executive Directors Report
- District Caucuses

6:30 p.m.

President's Banquet Honoring 2012-2013 President Elect Ricky Harcrow

8 p.m.

President's Inaugural Celebration Dance



# RDS Smart Government Awards

## 2012 Small County Category Award Winner Presented to Cleburne County Commission



*Left to right: RDS Director of Business Development Pete Yonce; Cleburne County Probate Judge and Commission Chairman Ryan Robertson; Cleburne County Administrator Steve Swafford.*

**Revenue Discovery Systems (RDS)** presented the Cleburne County Commission the 2012 Smart Government Award in the Small County category. Cleburne County was recognized for developing several non-traditional partnerships that secured alternative funding sources to pay for the construction of a sustainable, multi-use facility. Known as the Talladega Mountains Natural Resource Center, the new facility will be home to the Cleburne County Emergency Management Agency, 911 Board, Cleburne County Administration, and the Jackson State University (JSU) Field Schools.

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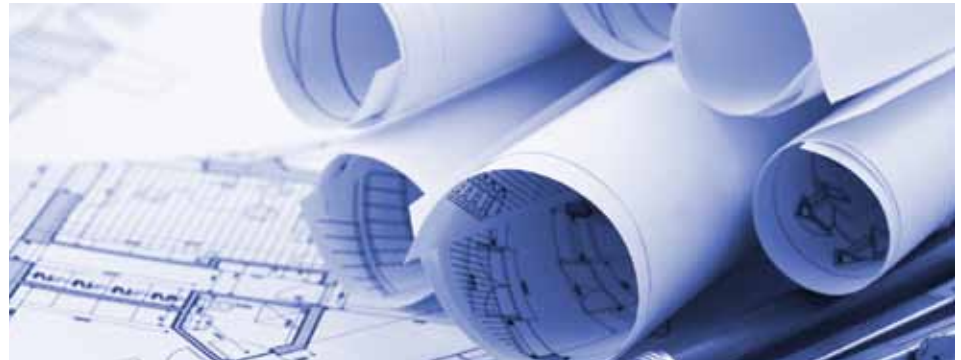


# From the Cover

## Blueprint *continued from p. 17*

communities have an opportunity use this model to align their own local leadership – from schools, to city and county leaders, and across the private sector – to create a seamless environment for success,” he said.

Global trends such as on-shoring and increased investment from China will continue to affect Alabama and the businesses that operate here, he said. “Key to staying on top of these trends is our relationships with our existing industries. Our economic growth will continue to be driven by these existing companies, and communities can increase their chances of success by



maintaining strong relationships with company leadership.”

He also offered further advice to local leaders about critical partnerships. “Companies looking to locate in the state are not focused on city or county lines. They’re looking at the

combined assets of an area. This is keenly important,” Taylor said. “City and county leaders should look for opportunities to market themselves as a region, knowing that a rising tide lifts all boats. And in this day of limited resources, it just makes sense.”



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## From the Cover

# Logging notice, ATRIP to be featured at event

There are two particularly hot topics in county transportation circles these days, and the Association of County Commissions of Alabama (ACCA) Annual Convention will shine a spotlight on both of them on Thursday, Aug. 23.

That morning at 10:30 commissioners and engineers will combine for a joint session, "Implementation of the Logging Notification Act," where participants will be briefed on a model ordinance prepared by the Association of County Engineers of Alabama (ACEA). Then at 1:30 that afternoon, everyone will hear about the Alabama Transportation Rehabilitation and Improvement Program (ATRIP) from John Cooper and Ed Austin from the Alabama Department of Transportation during a general session.

### Logging notice

Earlier this year, the Legislature passed Act 2012-257, which creates state standards for a system for loggers to give notice to counties before using county roads to haul timber or other wood products to market. Effective July 1, local notice and permit programs that conflict with the new system are repealed – to the extent they conflict with the new law.

"Counties that wish to require advance notification from logging operations must now use the process in this new law," said Sonny Brasfield, executive director of ACCA. "The work of the Association's committee has produced a standard ordinance, forms and enforcement procedures. In this way, all counties can use the same procedures."



**Speakers:** ACCA Executive Director Sonny Brasfield (left) and Elmore County Engineer Richie Beyer (right)

**Topic:** "Implementation of the Logging Notification Act"

**Date:** Aug. 23

**Time:** 10:30 a.m.

Participants will receive model documents prepared by an ACEA committee, headed by Elmore County Engineer Richie Beyer. These documents include a detailed ordinance, notice form, warning, citation and other items needed to implement the new system.

"At the convention we will review all the documents and answer questions on how to implement and enforce this new process," Brasfield said. "We hope that every county will be represented at this session."

Under the new law, loggers wanting to use county roads will have to give notice two business days in advance if they want to use an existing access point for a tract of timber. If the loggers propose using a new access point, they will have to give notice four business days in advance.

The notice must include the expected haul route as well as contact information for all contractors and subcontractors involved.

### ATRIP

Gov. Robert Bentley's ATRIP is now well underway, with the first round of funding announced in May and two more rounds to go. Altogether, \$800 million to \$1 billion in projects are planned, making it

*continued on p. 24*

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# From the Cover

## Logging *continued from p. 23*

the largest road and bridge improvement program in Alabama history.

“We think we got off to a good start, but we know we have challenges coming up,” said John Cooper, director of the Alabama Department of Transportation. “What we have accomplished to this point in time is about as much as we could have reasonably hoped.”

The Phase 1 announcement included 105 projects for local government, with \$110 million in ATRIP funds combining with \$29 million in local funds.

When he speaks at the convention, Cooper said he would update listeners on progress with ATRIP as well as discuss options for local match funds. Counties are required to put up a 20 percent match for the ATRIP dollars. The program is funded through bonds that will be repaid with federal dollars.

“We are working to determine whether there is a place to find some funds for



**Speaker:** ALDOT Director John Cooper (above) and Ed Austin, chief of innovative programs

**Topic:** “ATRIP, the Alabama Transportation Rehabilitation and Improvement Program”

**Date:** Aug. 23

**Time:** 1:30 p.m.

those who aren’t able to match,” said Cooper, who will be joined by Ed Austin, innovative programs bureau chief at the Alabama Department of Transportation. “Our job is to determine those who can and those who really can’t.”

He said a decision on state help with matching funds will likely not be made until the Alabama

Legislature returns to Montgomery in regular session early next year. “Our resources are very limited,” he said. “The days when people could look to the state to solve their match and transportation problems are behind us.”

One option could be to pursue legislation to allow local gas tax referendums to provide matching dollars.

A number of questions have come in about how county plans are being processed by the state, and Cooper said there are some inherent tensions there. “I know I will never solve it in a final sense, but I am working on it,” he said.

He encouraged counties to prepare now for the upcoming rounds of ATRIP announcements. The deadline for Phase 2 applications is Oct. 5, and the deadline for Phase 3 applications is March 29, 2013.

Cooper said he would reserve time at the end of his remarks to take questions from listeners.



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## Treasurer to explain trust fund amendment

On Sept. 18, Alabama voters will decide if the state's budget woes are best solved by making a withdrawal from the Alabama Trust Fund.

Almost exactly one month before the polls open for that special constitutional amendment election, county officials will get the details on the proposal from the one person who knows all the pros and cons -- State Treasurer Young Boozer.

The proposed amendment, passed by the Legislature just before midnight on the last day of this year's regular session, allows for \$437 million to be taken from the Alabama Trust Fund over the next three years.

The money will be used to shore up ailing General Fund agencies such as Medicaid and the Department of Corrections. Without voter approval, the amendment's provisions will not take effect.

Boozer is scheduled to speak during the opening general session of the 84th ACCA Annual Convention on Aug. 22 to provide counties with an in-depth look at the amendment and other issues related to the Alabama Trust Fund.

As treasurer he presides over the board that manages the fund, which contains annual drilling royalty payments and the proceeds from leasing the drilling rights to Alabama's off-shore oil reserves.

"We are extremely excited to have Treasurer Boozer be a part of our

convention," said ACCA President Tim Choate. "This amendment is certainly a bit confusing and he can provide the insight and details we need to make a proper decision before election day.

He has worked closely with our Association for years and has a strong record of including counties in his initiatives."

Choate said the ACCA Board of Directors will discuss the amendment during its convention meeting and counties will decide if the Association will take a position on the amendment as part of the convention business session.

Today counties receive 10 percent of the annual income from the trust fund, he said, so any changes that could impact that revenue stream must be carefully evaluated.

Supporters say the amendment will result in a swap of state education money to the general fund agencies by passing money through the Alabama Trust Fund.

Both legislative leaders and Gov. Robert Bentley say there is no back-up plan for state government. Should voters turn down the idea, massive funding cuts will be necessary when the new budget year begins on October 1, they say.

The proposal allows for a three-year withdrawal of a total of \$437 million from the corpus of the Alabama Trust Fund, which today has more than



**Speaker:** State Treasurer Young Boozer

**Topic:** "Blueprint for Change: Alabama Trust Fund"

**Date:** Aug. 22

**Time:** 9:15 a.m.

\$2 billion in assets. At the same time exactly \$437 million -- withdrawn from the trust fund two years ago to provide education operating revenue -- is scheduled to be repaid by legislative act.

ACCA Executive Director Sonny Brasfield said the Association

expressed serious concerns about the new amendment because there is no guarantee that the education withdrawal will be repaid.

"If, for some reason, the education money is not repaid," he explained, "then this proposal would reduce the corpus of the Alabama Trust Fund and would permanently lower the annual payments made to counties.

This gives us reason to look very carefully at the long-term impact of this proposal."

The Association worked closely with Boozer and Senate sponsor Arthur Orr on the bill's original language, designed to improve the overall financial health of the Alabama Trust Fund.

Once the measure was allowed to come up for a final-passage vote in the House, it was changed to include the withdrawal provisions.

"The withdrawal concept was not in the original bill. Those pushing this approach did not share the details of their plan with us until it was too late to offer our amendment language," Brasfield said. "As a result, the Association's concerns were not seriously considered as the new plan was developed."



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**HUGE 2-DAY CONTRACTORS EQUIPMENT & TRUCK AUCTION • PHILADELPHIA, MISSISSIPPI  
WEDNESDAY, MAY 30<sup>th</sup> & THURSDAY, MAY 31<sup>st</sup> • 2012**

**CONTRACTORS EQUIPMENT & TRUCK AUCTION • PHILADELPHIA, MISSISSIPPI  
WEDNESDAY, JULY 18<sup>th</sup> & THURSDAY, JULY 19<sup>th</sup> • 2012**

**HUGE 2-DAY CONTRACTORS EQUIPMENT & TRUCK AUCTION • PHILADELPHIA, MISSISSIPPI  
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19<sup>th</sup> & THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20<sup>th</sup> • 2012**

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### Etowah County's Simms wins Administrator of the Year

Etowah County's Patrick Simms has been named County Administrator of the Year by his peers in the Association of County Administrators of Alabama. The award was announced at the association's annual conference May 16-17.

Simms, chief executive officer in Etowah County, was nominated by the Etowah County Commission.

"Patrick has served our county well in the last six years, consistently being mindful of the county's finances employees and future growth," the commission wrote in its letter of nomination. "We are pleased to have him as part of our team."

Among the many county accomplishments achieved during Simms' tenure, the commissioners

noted purchasing the county's first industrial park, operating of the county's first animal shelter, restructuring county debt to ease burden and speed payoff, compiling a growing reserve fund even in tight economic times and negotiating

contracts with vendors to save thousands of dollars.

Simms has served on the board of directors for the ACAA. He also holds the professional designation as a certified county administrator through the association.



*Lee County Administrator Roger Rendleman, left, presents the ACAA County Administrator of the Year Award to Patrick Simms, chief executive officer in Etowah County.*

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### Cleburne County wins the 2012 Excellence in County Administration Award

Cleburne County won for a project called "Voter's Choice," which allows voters to designate their preferred polling place within their commission district, rather than being assigned one based on where they live.

The award was designed to recognize programs that are outstanding in quality and innovative in approach that is initiated by the county administrative staff for the direct benefit of county citizens.



*Cleburne County won the 2012 Excellence in County Administration Award presented by the Association of County Administrators of Alabama. The award was announced at the association's annual conference May 16-17, and County Administrator Steve Snafford accepted the award.*



## Administrators honored for decade of service around state

The Association of County Administrators of Alabama recently honored five county administrators who have each put in 10 years of service as county administrators.

“The county administrator plays a critical role in helping the commission successfully meet the needs of county residents, and these honorees have been and continue to be leaders that their counties can rely on,” said Sonny Brasfield, executive director of the Association of County Commissions of Alabama.

- Pam Ball of Limestone County has a total of more than 25 years of experience in county government, with 10 of those as administrator.



**Ball**

- Sherrie Kelley of Coosa County has a total of 32 years of experience in county government, with 10 of those as administrator.
- Roger Rendleman, CPA, of Lee County, has a total



**Kelley**



**Rendleman**



**Sanders**



**Thomas**

of 16 years experience in county government, with 10 of those as administrator. He also spent five years as a county auditor for the Alabama Department of Examiners of Public Accounts.

- Harry Sanders has been Pike County’s administrator for 10 years.
- Susan B. Thomas has been Macon County’s administrator for 10 years.

All of those honored also hold the professional designation of certified county administrator through ACAA.

The Association of County Administrators of Alabama, an affiliate group of the Association of County Commissions of Alabama, represents professionals serving in administrative-related capacities in county government.

ACAA annually honors county administrators on their 10th year of service and in five-year increments thereafter.



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# Beyer: Benefits of NACE 'priceless' to counties

The National Association of County Engineers recently installed its new president, and it is none other than Alabama's own Richie Beyer.

Beyer is county engineer in Elmore County, and he is a past president of the Association of County Engineers of Alabama. Here's a conversation with him about his plans for the coming year:

### What are your goals for the year as NACE president?

**Beyer:** Since I started attending NACE many years ago, I have always felt that NACE has great potential in advocating for county road and bridge issues. Some of this belief persists from the relationship that our own state county engineers association, ACEA, shares with the ACCA and our joint effort for positive impact on our state issues. Our associations have been consulted for guidance and recommendations on transportation topics here in the state. One goal that I share with the rest of the NACE leadership is to continue to guide and elevate the organization to a level where we have that same impact on transportation policies in Washington. To be this type player in the Washington arena, NACE must be viable and sustainable as we go forward.

From time to time organizations need to examine themselves to ensure they are meeting the needs of their membership and determining the best ways to equip themselves to carry out their mission. That's where I believe NACE sits and is the reason why I have launched several task forces to examine and make recommendations on ways to ensure NACE's success. Working with the NACE Executive Committee, appointments were made to four task forces to ensure that continuity would be provided beyond my year as president. These task forces have been assigned focus areas with topics such as Corporate Partnerships, Member Services, Partnerships (other governmental or professional/trade association relationships) and a Vision Task Force designed to dissect our current business model.



(From left) Alabama Transportation Director John Cooper, FHWA Administrator Victor Mendez and NACE President Richie Beyer at the 55th Annual Transportation Conference in Montgomery. Photo: Rebecca Leigh White

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# News You Can Use

On the advocacy front, we also have had good communication with FHWA and specifically the FHWA Administrator Victor Mendez, on several key topics including his Every Day Counts initiatives. In addition, project delivery, streamlining and reauthorization are a few of the key topics that we are engaged in to provide input to the administration and Congress to ensure county interests are protected and addressed. We will continue to pursue these major topics during my tenure, as well as continue to explore and develop other partnerships beneficial to our members.

## How does NACE membership benefit county engineers in Alabama?

**Beyer:** Even though we sometimes get bogged down in the day-to-day goings on of our counties, we are all impacted by decisions made at the federal level and state level. Many of the state decisions begin by policies and legislation developed at the federal level. Without the exclusive member communications from NACE's Washington, D.C., office, many of us would be blindsided by these federal decisions. Yes, we may be members of other organizations that maybe could get some of the info out to us, but from a standpoint of a comprehensive local transportation focus, there is no better group than NACE to rely on.

NACE's membership has a wealth of experience that can be tapped into by NACE members. From information gained at the numerous technical sessions at the NACE annual conference, the discussions while visiting the diverse equipment and vendor expo or calling a NACE member you met while attending one of the meetings because you talked about a unique program or experience that member had in his county, the opportunities to share professional experiences and provide better services on behalf of your county commission to the citizens of the your county is priceless.

These are just a few examples of the benefits of NACE membership. You and your county's investment in NACE will be repaid back to your county many times over.

## What impact does NACE have on the national level when it

## comes to policy development and federal priorities?

**Beyer:** NACE is recognized in Washington, D.C., along with several other transportation interests. We have the unique position of representing county infrastructure though. We actively work with NACo and more specifically Bob Fogel and the NACo Transportation Steering Committee to provide technical expertise and assist in developing policies that are transmitted to the members of Congress. This information is also disseminated to the membership of NACE and NACo to encourage our members to take action by contacting their Congressional delegation members and voicing their concerns. This is a similar process to what we undertake here at the state level with the ACEA and ACCA.

NACE is in a position to affect policy and priorities at the staff level as well. I mentioned FHWA and our relationship with its Administrator Victor Mendez. NACE also works with other agencies such as USDOT,

EPA, US Army Corp of Engineers, FEMA, as well as many trade/professional groups that affect transportation policy.

## What are the major issues that you face in Elmore County that are common to county engineers across the nation?

**Beyer:** It should not surprise anyone that many of the same issues we face in Alabama affect other counties across the country. Dwindling operating revenues due to the fact most all counties rely on a per-gallon gasoline tax to fund road and bridge repairs, the uncertainty of passage of a federal highway bill to ensure a long-term highway funding mechanism, and the discussion of how to rein in construction costs and be able to preserve the systems we own all dominate the discussion when county engineers get together regardless of which region of the country we reside. Counties are enduring challenging times, and innovative solutions are being sought all over the country.



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## Elmore County's Beyer chosen for Engineer of the Year

Richie Beyer, county engineer in Elmore County, has been named 2012 County Engineer of the Year by the Association of County Engineers of Alabama.

"Richie has been involved in virtually every major initiative of ACEA during the last 15 years," said Sonny Brasfield, executive director of the Association of County Commissions of Alabama, "from drafting model subdivision regulations to chairing the committee that submitted three different applications for TIGER Grant funding to replace county bridges – despite the fact that Elmore County had no eligible bridges, to chairing the current ACEA committee that protected county interests against a forestry initiative to restrict county authority to address logging on county roads."

Beyer has worked in county engineering for 17 years, serving as Elmore County Engineer since 2003. With a county population of approximately 80,000, he is responsible for 800 miles of paved roads, 200 miles of unpaved roads, and 127 bridge structures. He currently serves as president of the National Association of County Engineers.

Beyer earned his B.S. in civil engineering from Florida State University and is a registered Professional Engineer in Alabama,



**Beyer**

Florida, and Georgia. He began serving on the ACEA board in 2003, holding offices through president. He also earned the county engineering administration designation from ACEA. He served on ACEA committees pertaining to floodplain management, joint equipment bidding, highway safety, and education and training as well as various committees for ACCA.

He also served on the state's SMART Taskforce for Highway Safety, Every Day Counts STIC for Alabama,

and serves as a Montgomery MPO Technical Coordinating Committee Member. A member of NACE since 2003, he previously served as Alabama State Director for the NACE Board of Directors and currently serves on the National Association of Counties' Transportation Steering Committee.

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## Annual engineering scholarship program named for Spraggins

The annual college scholarship program of the Association of County Engineers of Alabama has been christened the ACEA Richard Spraggins Scholarship Program in honor of one of the program's strongest supporters.

"Richard believes in this program and has worked hard to make it a success through the years," said Randy Cole, ACEA president. "His efforts are an investment in the future of our profession."



**Spraggins**

Spraggins retired from Blount County this year after many years of service as county engineer. With the association, he is a past president who has also served as a district board member, and he earned the county engineering administration designation from ACEA.

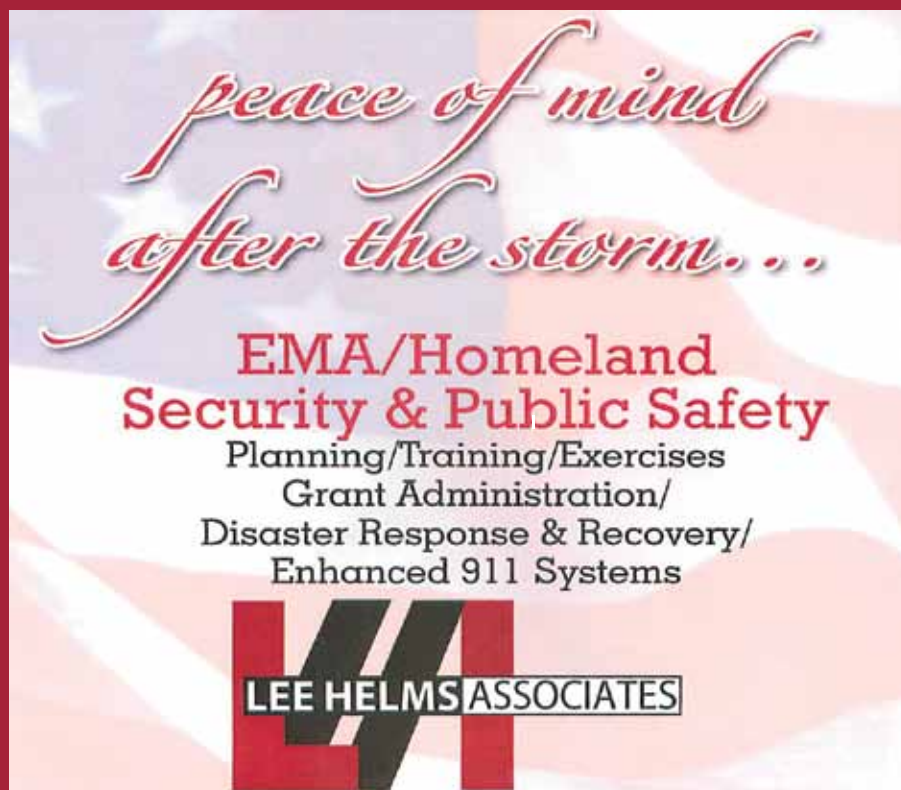
### Three scholarships awarded in 2012

The ACEA Richard Spraggins Scholarship Program usually awards two \$2,000 college scholarships each year, one to an incoming freshman and one to a college student. For 2012, a special third scholarship was awarded for \$500.

Buckley Walters of Enterprise won the scholarship for an incoming freshman. Walters, 17, is enrolled at the University of Alabama in civil engineering. He is a 2012 graduate of Enterprise High School, where he played football and was active in FFA. He also works part-time at Aureus International and is an active member of Union Grove Baptist Church.

Jordan Hastie of Mobile won the \$2,000 scholarship for a current engineering student. Hastie, 18, is a pre-engineering student at Auburn University, where she is active in the Honors College, Young Life and a social sorority. She is a 2011 graduate of UMS-Wright Preparatory School.

Davon Elder of Goshen won the special \$500 award. Elder, 18, is a 2012 graduate of Goshen High School who has also earned credits from Troy University through a dual enrollment program called Global Studies. This fall he will be a sophomore pre-engineering student at Troy University. During high school, he played basketball, was president of Key Club, vice president of Troy Kappa League, secretary of Future Business Leaders of America and superintendent of the Greater Saint Paul A.M.E. Church Sunday School.



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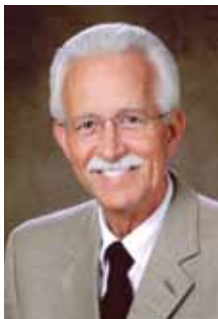
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