

The background of the cover is a complex network diagram. It consists of numerous circular nodes, each containing a stylized human figure in a different color (red, blue, green, yellow, purple, black, white). These nodes are interconnected by a dense web of grey lines, creating a mesh-like structure that symbolizes a network of leaders or community members.

# COUNTY COMMISSION

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Volume 56, Number 5  
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**What's Inside...**  
**A Network of Leaders**



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# in this issue

VOLUME 56, NUMBER 5



*The ACCA affiliate groups form a key network of leaders working to strengthen county government.*



## from the cover...

A network of leaders ..... 18

## news you can use...

Ludgood wants to focus on developing leadership, sharing best practices ..... 11

Smith brings economic mindset to position ..... 12

Disaster debris services now part of joint bid program ..... 14

Batemon wants to bring strength, focus to NACo ..... 16

Counties help guide changes to tax collection process ..... 25

Education benefits commissioners ..... 27

CGEI offers full slate of courses for employees in 2013 ..... 29

Support for county jails to continue through 2013 ..... 30

CROAA awards highlight excellence in field ..... 33

## points of view...

President's Corner ..... 4  
*Growing our own leaders*

The County Line ..... 6  
*Reform group could redefine county government in Alabama for decades to come*

In Legal Terms ..... 8  
*Education programs critical for county commissioners, employees*

## who we are...

2012-13 ACCA Board of Directors ..... 34

ACCA Staff ..... 34

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*Hon. Ricky Harcrow  
President*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ricky Harcrow".

## Growing our own leaders

ACCA embarks on new leadership initiative to accelerate learning for commissioners early in their careers

Election time always brings with it change in the personalities that hold public office around our state. For those who are chosen by the voters for the first time, this “change” represents one of the most exciting – and difficult – challenges of their lifetime.

By now, these newly elected commissioners have attended their first commission meetings, cast their first votes and should be settling in. We hope they’ve participated in our orientation program, designed to provide needed insight and resources to the more than 90 first-time commissioners elected in November. It is an outstanding opportunity to assist the new officeholders with their transition and, in the process, to learn from their unique – and still impartial – perspectives.

For this Association, change often also means it is time for new people to step up on the state level. Coaches work very hard to prepare their team for the inevitability of an injury to the starting quarterback, the top defensive player or running back. Many adopt the “next man up” approach – leaning heavily on the ability of those in the background to step forward and perform when the spotlight turns in their direction.

The top leader of our Association changes each year, as one president ends a 12-month term and another picks up the gavel. But, for a long time, the backbone of our organization has remained steady with decades of experience sitting around the board of directors table. This wealth of experience has guided our Association on a very productive journey the last 20

years as we’ve become a stronger and more effective voice for all 67 counties; enhanced our educational and technical services; provided long-term vision for county government in Alabama and cultivated a network of influential affiliate groups – just to name a few things.

But with the results of the November election, four long-serving members of our board retired – Bruce Hamrick of Walker County, Jerold Dean of Conecuh County, Mike Gillespie of Madison County and John Carter of Talladega County. Together the four represented more than 70 years of service on the Association’s board. We are excited that Cleburne County Probate Judge Ryan Robertson and Madison County Commissioner Roger Jones have accepted appointments to fill two of these vacancies, and we look forward to their meaningful contributions.

This significant change in leadership for this Association is exactly what I had in mind during our convention last August when I spoke about the need for a leadership program to cultivate those who will lead our efforts to protect and improve county government in Alabama. It is not enough to cross our fingers and hope that effective public servants will magically fill the shoes of those who retired. As each of us knows on a personal level, we must be purposeful and intentional as an Association to nurture our future leaders, who can have impact in their districts, in their counties, in our state and across our nation.

## If you were elected for the first time in 2010 – and you are already thinking about re-election in 2014 – I challenge you to also consider making application to our new leadership initiative.

This program will approach the challenge from both an Association standpoint as well as developing leadership skills that will enhance the performance of commissioners back in their home districts.

In September our board of directors gave initial approval to an approach developed by the ACCA staff. This new program will be open to county commissioners, county commission chairs and probate judge/chairs in the first year of their second term in office. In this way we would involve persons early in their county career who had already demonstrated interest in a more long-term role and who have been successful in one re-election bid.

Program participants will make a two-year commitment that will conclude with the recognition of the “graduates” at the ACCA Legislative Conference. Clearly, participation in the program will require a major commitment of time, resources and energy. Content and activities will expose the participants to a wide variety of Association-related activities, encouraging them to become active participants and leaders in the programs that will enhance their county commissions and the effectiveness of the Association.

Examples of program elements include:

- separate lobbying sessions on Capitol Hill during the NACo Legislative Conference in Washington D.C.;
- two-day sessions in Montgomery during the Legislative sessions to expose members to their role as a voice for county government;

- trips to counties throughout the state to tour innovative and productive county offices and programs;
- visibility at ACCA events, with special emphasis on participation by the members of the leadership class at district meetings, training, and other events;
- participation in the meetings of the Association’s steering committees, legislative committee and boards of directors;
- direct involvement in the Association’s affiliate groups;

- a mentoring program to pair class members with established Association leaders.

The program will begin in two years, following the elections in November of 2014. At that time we will be looking for those persons who have just been elected to their second term in office. They will embark on a two-year journey together – exposing each participant to leadership opportunities and skills that will benefit our entire state.

If you were elected for the first time in 2010 – and you are already thinking about re-election in 2014 – I challenge you to also consider making application to our new leadership initiative.



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*Sonny Brasfield  
Executive Director*

*Sonny Brasfield*

## Reform group could redefine county government in Alabama for decades to come

Constitutional Revision Commission is considering proper relationship between counties and the Alabama Legislature

After almost a quarter century working with the men and women of county government in Alabama, we continue to face the same question: what is county government?

With the 2013 legislative session looming, the answer to that question has never been so important. For this year, perhaps more than any time since our constitution was debated more than 110 years ago, Alabama's leaders are considering this old question.

Are counties simply an arm of the state that waits to deliver only those services specifically directed by the state? Or should counties be catalysts for leadership in the community, working toward improved economic development, enhanced quality of life, safe and responsive transportation, effective disaster preparedness and enhanced public safety?

Since 1901, counties have struggled with a legislative process that promotes decisions based on personality rather than policy. The constitution requires each county commission to operate much like a stand-alone colonial village twisting under the changing direction of the sitting leadership. The result is 67 county commissions that can scarcely make long-range decisions to promote growth and economic improvement.

Rather, when the Legislature convenes, county governments from Scottsboro to Atmore brace for new "local" laws that assign duties, reallocate county revenue, reduce county decision-making or establish new mandatory procedures. Often these come

without input from the very people who are forced to make the difficult, community-changing decisions to comply with these "local" laws.

Alabama's legislative process -- grounded in that century-old constitution -- allows bills that apply to a specific county to become law if they are supported by House and Senate members who represent that county. These "local" laws pass without legislative debate or review. And these "local" laws have, more than anything else, entangled county government in ineffectiveness and financial instability.

Want evidence? You need to look no further than the \$1 billion local road program of Gov. Robert Bentley. County participation in this successful program -- the single largest investment in local transportation in Alabama history -- has been brought to a standstill in many locations because the county commission has little or no reserves to use as necessary matching funds.

Those commissions -- saddled with local laws they have restructured, diverted and reallocated their local revenues -- have less reserves than some of the convenience stores in their communities.

How can two legislators be allowed to change the structure of the county commission, divert county revenue or assign the commission expensive new responsibilities without the legislation undergoing even the most elementary review? The answer is that the 1901 constitution established a process that does not work in today's world.

## Since 1901, county government has struggled at the whim of a legislative process that promotes decisions based on personality rather than policy.

But there is some hope. The Constitutional Revision Commission has proposed -- and voters have ratified -- the rewrite of two articles of the document. And now the group has turned its attention to the proper relationship between the Legislature and county government.

Many ideas have been presented to the group. Few of them are actually new, and some are so controversial that they threaten the group's success.

The Association has been given unprecedented access to the workings of the commission and has tried to be realistic about what can be accomplished. We've focused our

discussions not on tax authority or land use but on the same, lingering question: what is county government?

We believe the county commission should have some say in what it is. And this Association has asked the reform group to consider giving the county commission some role in implementation of these game-changing "local" laws.

The proposal was approved by ACCA's board last January. It has been reviewed all over the state. And, as late as mid-December, the idea continued to be under serious consideration by the reform group.

There's another positive sign. The state's legislative leaders have signaled that they understand that the current system has hindered the very level of government that could have such a positive impact on the future of our state.

The time for discussion is almost past. Will the panel recommend changes that will address this "local" issue or will we continue to live in 1901?

The answer will determine -- at least for the next several decades -- exactly what county government is. And that answer will impact what our state can become.



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Mary E. Pons  
Association Counsel



## Education programs critical for county commissioners, employees

Participants say they value course content, interaction with peers

Every two years, we start a new round of training for newly elected county commissioners. This is required under an Alabama law mandating 50 hours of training which “shall include, but not be limited to, instruction in local government operations finance and budgeting; planning; public works and utilities; environmental management; personnel management; responsiveness to the community; ethics, duties, and responsibilities of members of the county commission”. Ala. Code § 11-3-43. This covers a lot, but there are many more important issues to cover, and so as we plan the agendas for the courses offered under the Alabama Local Government Training Institute (ALGTI), we struggle to limit each class to 10 hours of instruction.

Occasionally, a newly elected commissioner will bemoan “going back to school,” but almost without exception, after participating in the first class or two, the reluctant commissioner understands the value in this program, and many commissioners enthusiastically continue with ALGTI’s graduate program after completing the basics. And invariably, the report from new commissioners is that they not only learned from the class instruction, but also from the interaction with others.

The Association’s board and membership have always viewed training as a priority, both for county commissioners and for county staff. In fact, the law requiring training for commissioners was enacted at the request of this Association.

Additionally, the 2015 Task Force<sup>1</sup> formed in 2010 to develop the Association’s long-range plan identified training as one of the services viewed most favorably by members. The final report of the Task Force set the goal to “improve the delivery of training programs and activities to county officials and employees.”

Work on this goal was one of the first projects undertaken by Association staff following release of the 2015 Task Force Report. While there was some “tweaking” of the program for county commissioners, it appeared efforts should be concentrated on the educational programs for county employees. An education committee looked at determined the programs for county administrative and highway department staff and for emergency communications districts needed revamping. The committee recommended these programs be brought in-house and the Association board agreed. This committee worked for many months developing the new program to be administered by Association staff, and the new County Government Education Institute (CGEI), working under the direction of the ALGTI Board of Directors, held its first classes in the spring of 2010.<sup>2</sup>

I was fortunate to be involved in the development and early administration of the CGEI program, and it has been a labor of love for me. The education committee members were dedicated and determined and shared the staff’s view that a strong educational program for county employees was one of the

## Counties would be well-advised to require personnel to participate in these programs, complete their certification and attend continuing education opportunities whenever available.

most valuable services this Association could provide its membership. It was clear to committee members and Association staff that county personnel must have a solid understanding of how county government operates, as well as a working knowledge of personnel administration, county finances, Alabama's ethics law, and even legislative and governmental relations. With these goals in mind, the program was designed to ensure that through both classroom instruction and written materials for later reference, county employees seeking certification in the CGEI program would return to their counties with a strong set of tools to help them perform their job duties in an effective manner.

The County Government Education Institute begins its fourth year of classes in January 2013. It has been a great success – due in large part to the efforts of staff members Donna Key and Brandy Perry who handle the daily administration of this growing program. The positive comments from participants are humbling and make clear that the goals set by the 2015 Task Force are being met. As with the commissioners, participants view the interaction with others as an added benefit.

There is no law requiring county staff to participate in these training programs, but like the required training for new county commissioners, the benefits to both the participants and the county commission are immeasurable. For this reason, the Association has consistently (and

strongly) encouraged all county commissions to budget for this training and encourage key staff to attend. Counties would be well-advised to require personnel to participate in these programs, complete their certification and attend continuing education opportunities whenever available

I am passionate about our training programs and their importance to all those working in county government. While all aspects of my position are stimulating, challenging and rewarding, these programs are really my favorite. It is a great opportunity to get to know commissioners and county staff.

Additionally, it gives me the chance to talk about issues county officials and staff face every day and hopefully provide some guidance on complicated situations. I always return wishing I had more time with participants – to address the complexities of county government with those in the trenches and to get to know those hardworking and dedicated folks.

*1 The full Report of the 2015 Task Force is available at <http://www.alabamacounties.org/publications/>.*

*2 Detailed information on program requirements, courses and registration procedures is available at <http://www.alabamacounties.org/education/> or you can contact the ACCA office for a brochure.*

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## Ludgood wants to focus on developing leadership, sharing best practices

It is true that Merceria Ludgood has represented Mobile County Commission's District 1 since 2007, but that does not tell the whole story. When she took office, Ludgood had a head start on most first-time commissioners because she had been a full-time assistant county attorney in Mobile for 14 years.

In August, Ludgood was elected second vice president of the Association of County Commissions of Alabama. If the usual officer rotation is followed, she will become president in 2014. She is projected to be only the third female president in ACCA's history.

"Once I joined ACCA and started to see the things ACCA does and what it provides for the member counties, I was truly excited," she said. "I've never seen an organization that worked as efficiently and with such influence."

With ACCA, Ludgood has served on the board of directors and the Justice and Public Safety Steering Committee. At the national level, she serves on the National Association of Counties Community and Economic Development Steering Committee and the Gulf Counties and Parishes Gulf Oil Spill Task Force, where she chairs the Subcommittee on Revisions to the Oil Pollution Act. She also serves on a Gulf Coast Work Group for the Environmental Protection Agency's Local Government Advisory Council.

One of her goals for ACCA – a leadership program for commissioners – is already in development. Two other things she would like to see are a scholarship program and best practices



**Merceria Ludgood**

database to help counties share information.

"The previous commissioner in Mobile County's District 1, Sam Jones, played a major role in the life of this Association, and it is a real pleasure to see that tradition continue," said Sonny Brasfield, ACCA's executive director. "Commissioner Ludgood brings a wealth of experience in county government and a true collaborative spirit that is at the heart of our work to help counties large and small, urban and rural, work more effectively."

The commissioner's career history includes work at a center for children

with emotional problems and a year teaching public school, though most of her work has been in the legal field. In addition to her years in the county attorney's office, she has been in private practice, led Legal Services Corporation of Alabama, worked for the national office of Legal Services Corporation and served briefly as assistant city attorney for the City of Mobile.

Ludgood earned a bachelor's degree in secondary education and master's degree in special education/emotional counseling from the University of Alabama. She earned a law degree from Antioch School of Law and a master of divinity degree from the Alabama Interdenominational Seminary.

A native of the Mobile's Crichton community, Ludgood now lives in downtown Mobile. She is married to Carlos Williams, a public defender in the federal courts. She enjoys reading and travel, and she also plays an active role in Friendship Missionary Baptist Church.

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## Smith brings economic mindset to position

Bullock County Commission Chairman Ron Smith is bringing his own special insights to bear as minority director for the Association of County Commissions of Alabama.



**Ron Smith**

Smith explains that his perspective on the position is “not necessarily race-based

or gender-based, but rather ‘minority’ as being economically deprived – in the Black Belt especially.” This position “gives me a platform to speak for small counties that don’t have a huge tax base.

“Economically we are in the minority. Sometimes we don’t have the infrastructure. Our population is less; our tax base is less.... That’s what interested me – to bring those kinds of issues to the table – and to make Alabama one Alabama.”

### Minority Issues Steering Committee

Ron Smith (Bullock), Chair	Tyrone Moye (Clarke)
Ricky Burney (Clay)	Carolyn Parker (Etowah)
Charlie Harris (Pike)	Rhondel Rhone (Clarke)
Robert Harris (Lowndes)	Ottice Russelle (Sumter)
Mose Jones (Lawrence)	Charlie Sankey (Crenshaw)
Louis Maxwell (Macon)	Jiles Williams Jr. (Montgomery)
Leonard Millender (Conecuh)	

Smith, who lives in Union Springs, has been Bullock’s chairman since 2002. In 2012, he won another six-year term. A military veteran, he is a former patient administrator at a Veterans Administration hospital. He also has two years of college studies focusing on business administration.

For years he has been active in ACCA, serving two terms on the board of the ACCA Workers’ Compensation Self-Insurers Fund. As the fund’s chairman, he presided over unprecedented growth in the program that provides benefits to injured county employees. He has also served on ACCA steering committees and is a familiar face in lobbying efforts.

As minority director Smith chairs the Minority Issues Steering Committee, composed of 12 county commissioners. In addition to focusing this year on economic issues, the committee also provides insight and recommendations on ACCA’s legislative program while it is in development.

“Ron Smith’s perceptions about the challenges in struggling counties will help all of us understand how to move forward in Alabama,” said ACCA Executive Director Sonny Brasfield. “We’ve worked with Ron for many years and, even though this is his first term as minority director, he has made significant contributions to county government in many, many ways.”

One of Smith’s early goals has already been met. Smith had said that some communities would have difficulty paying the 20 percent match required by ATRIP, the Alabama Transportation Rehabilitation and Improvement Program. Alabama Department of Transportation Director John Cooper has since announced RAMP, the Rural Assistance Match Program, to help smaller communities fund transportation projects.

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By **Jamie Sandford**

Alabama Power Company



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room will feel like it's on 74 or 75.

And, let me tell you, those 3 or 4 degrees will make a big difference on

your power bill. In fact, each degree above that can decrease your power bill significantly. Wow. Now you know why I'm such a fan of the fan.



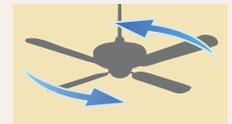
*Don't touch that dial. Just two degrees above 78 (in the summer) can reduce your air conditioning energy use by up to 10%.*

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*For more tips on ceiling fans, visit [AlabamaPower.com/tips](http://AlabamaPower.com/tips).*  
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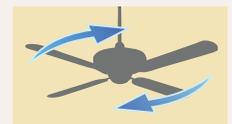
## In which direction should your fan blow?

.....

*If your fan has a reversible switch, make sure you've got it on the right setting. Now, there is a lot of debate about what the "right setting" is, but here is my take on things.*



*In the summer, your blades should be rotating counter-clockwise, so that you can feel cool air being pushed down on you.*



*In the winter, you want those blades rotating in a clockwise direction, which causes the hot air up near the ceiling to be redistributed to lower parts of the room.*

## Disaster debris services now part of joint bid program

After a disaster, counties face numerous problems, and tons and tons of debris are near the top of the list. Broken tree limbs, shredded shingles, splintered lumber and twisted sheet metal – basically anything the wind can pick up or rip off. And it all needs to be cleaned up.

Starting in 2013, finding the right contractor to help clean up the debris will not be on counties' list of problems, thanks to a groundbreaking new initiative from the Association of County Commissions of Alabama's County Joint Bid Program.



*Elmore County suffered significant damage from the tornadoes of April 27, 2011.*

Regional contracts for debris removal and monitoring will go into effect Jan. 1, 2013.

“In the event of a disaster, county officials don't have to worry about

“Oh my goodness, who am I going to get to help clean this up?” said John Hamm, ACCA's director of member services. “All they will have to do is pick up the phone and call the contact. Within 24 hours a contractor will be in their county starting the process of cleaning up debris – and they will already know the price.”

Marion County was one place that was hard hit by the April 2011 tornadoes. County Engineer Mike Shaw said three tornadoes plowed through the county, with the most severe one striking Hackleburg and leaving a nearly mile-wide track that stretched 25 miles in length.

The county was covered in more than 350,000 cubic yards of debris, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers handled the cleanup. Shaw said the pre-event contracts were a good idea because the county would have more control over the cleanup.

“They (the Corps) did a good job cleaning it up,” he said, “but we couldn't get good information from them on what it was costing.”

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# News You Can Use



Details on the pre-event contracts and how to use them are available at [www.alabamacounties.org/joint-bid-program/debris/](http://www.alabamacounties.org/joint-bid-program/debris/).

ACCA pursued this new initiative knowing that after a tornado or hurricane strikes, counties are at the mercy of contractors. Plus the competitive bidding process – even under emergency rules – takes time.

Through the joint bid program, a full competitive bidding process was completed, not just an expedited one, using carefully developed bid specifications – another part of the process that would have to be accelerated after a disaster has happened.

This project was driven by a committee of county engineers and county emergency management agency directors. The committee included Richie Beyer, Luke McGinty

and Eric Jones, all from Elmore County; Marty Lentz from Coffee County; Dennis McCall from Butler County; Chris Champion from Henry County and Roy Waite from Clarke County. They worked in consultation

with the Alabama Emergency Management Agency and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

“Every effort was made to comply with FEMA rules and regulations for reimbursement,” Hamm said.

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## Batemon wants to bring strength, focus to NACo

Alabama's own Stan Batemon is officially a candidate for second vice president of the National Association of Counties.

"NACo is very important to the citizens of Alabama – and, likewise, to citizens across the country," Batemon said.

"Alabama has a long record of participation in and support of NACo. We've been a 100 percent membership state for many, many years and we've been actively supportive of NACo in so many ways."

Batemon has been a commissioner in St. Clair County since 1986, and his leadership in his home state includes a year's service as president of the Association of County Commissions of Alabama. Altogether, he has served on the ACCA board now for more than 20 years.

"When I began thinking about seeking the office of 2nd vice president more than 18 months ago, none of us realized that

today the organization would be at such a critical juncture. But I am so glad that we are here – that I am here -- at this time in NACo's history," he said. "It is an exciting time that provides us with a unique opportunity to expand on the organization's strength and to refocus the organization's unity."

NACo is the only national organization representing the nation's 3,068 counties, parishes and boroughs. Like ACCA, the NACo officer rotation includes the positions of second vice president, first vice president and president. If Batemon wins his election in July of next year, he would likely become president of the organization in 2015.

"The ACCA board has already adopted a resolution supporting Stan's candidacy, and I believe we all have the utmost confidence that he would do an outstanding job," said Ricky Harcrow, ACCA president and president of the DeKalb County Commission. "As the campaign moves

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# BATEMON

for NACo 2nd Vice President



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forward, I am sure that his many friends in Alabama will step forward to do what we can to help.”

The number of opponents Batemon will face is unknown. Qualifying for second vice president ends Jan. 31, 2013.

## Stan Batemon Bio

Board of Directors Member, NACo

Elected to serve on NACo Audit Committee

Vice-Chair, NACo Veterans and Military Service Committee

Member, NACo Energy, Environment, and Land Use Steering Committee

Past President, Association of County Commissions of Alabama, & Board of Directors member for 20+ years

Member of St. Clair County Commission since 1986

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## A network of leaders

Getting people to work together effectively toward a shared goal is just one way of defining leadership.

If you go looking for wise words about leadership, you will find hundreds – if not thousands – of quotable quotes from all sorts of distinguished people.

County government in Alabama is rich with leadership, from elected officials down through the ranks of county staff members and employees. For this issue, County Commission magazine is spotlighting some of the leadership within counties by featuring the presidents of the affiliate groups of the

Association of County Commissions of Alabama.

Commissioners may be accustomed to thinking of their county department heads as followers, but these key staff members must also be leaders in their own right. This leadership shows not only in how they run their departments but also in how they work together with other counties to solve local problems on a statewide level.

Check out their favorite quotes and sayings about leadership, or turn the page to learn more about each of them.



**Chris Champion, CEA**

President, Association of County Engineers of Alabama

Engineer, Henry County

**True greatness, true leadership, is found in giving yourself in service to others, not in coaxing or inducing others to serve you.**

– Oswald Sanders



**“The task of leadership is not to put**

**greatness into humanity, but to elicit it, for the greatness is already there.”**

– John Buchan, former governor general of Canada

# From the Cover



**Terri A. Henderson, CRE**

President, County Revenue Officers Association of Alabama

Revenue Manager, Montgomery County Commission Tax and Audit Department

**“Leaders are made, they are not born. They are made by hard effort, which is the price which all of us must pay to achieve any goal that is worthwhile.”**

-- *Vince Lombardi*



**Bill Richvalsky, CECA**

President, Alabama Association of 9-1-1 Districts

9-1-1 Director/Operation Center Administrator, St. Clair County

**A good leader is one who can inspire others to believe that they can be more than they are. People need to be inspired to be the best that they can be.**



**“Great leaders are almost always great simplifiers, who can cut through argument, debate, and doubt to offer a solution everybody can understand.”**

-- *Colin Powell*



**Scott Kramer**

President, Alabama City-County Management Association

Risk Manager, Montgomery County

**The most effective managers are solution focused, process oriented, servant leaders.**



**“If you don’t know where you are going, you might wind up someplace else.”**

-- *Yogi Berra*



**Michael D. Evans,\* ALEM**

President, Alabama Association of Emergency Managers

Deputy Director, Mobile County Emergency Management Agency

**“Lead me, follow me, or get out of my way.”**

-- *General George S. Patton*

\*Evans will leave his AAEM office in January for an extended military deployment.



**Diane Kilpatrick, CCA**

President, Association of County Administrators of Alabama

Administrator, Butler County

**Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it.**

-- *Dwight D. Eisenhower*

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# From the Cover

County Commission magazine asked the affiliate presidents a few questions about their work experience, the special contribution that they and their colleagues make and what is best about working in county government.

## Michael D. Evans



**How long have you worked in county government?**

10 years, 6 months

**What is special about the role of county emergency managers?**

The role of a county emergency manager (EM) is special because we are like no other agency in county government. Our role and agency in some capacity touches everyone in the county and county government. A county emergency manager coordinates the response to an emergency and ensures that the response is running as safely and efficiently as possible by coordinating the allocation and use of resources. The emergency manager works hand-in-hand with other public safety agencies and volunteer agencies to make sure that the disaster response is as effective and efficient as possible. Responding and recovery from disaster is just a small part of an emergency manager's role. The county EM is also responsible for the County Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), coordinating various exercises to test the plan, conducting public education, providing assistance to local jurisdictions and county agencies before, during and after disaster strikes.

**What is the best part of working in county government?**

I get to live, work and have a positive impact on the county that I reside in, making sure that my family, friends and co-workers are ready and prepared for the next disaster.

## Bill Richvalsky



**How long have you worked in county government?**

22 years

**What is special about the role of 9-1-1 administrators?**

The importance of our job is it deals with life, property and the needs of the citizens of the counties we live in. We are their link to emergency services and help in other situations. In the world of 9-1-1 things are changing at a very fast pace and someone has to keep up with those changes and make sure all aspects of the job are taken care of and the equipment we use and need is up to date and able to accomplish these

goals. The job of the 9-1-1 director is of great responsibility because it is his job to see that all works well. He must be trained and knowledgeable about how it all works at his agency and in the state as a whole. He is responsible for reporting to the 9-1-1 board and county commission and dealing with funding. Our organizations would not be where they are today without 9-1-1 directors and their staffs, the cooperation of all public safety answering points in the state and involvement with other organizations such as ACCA.

**What is the best part of working in county government?**

To be in a job that not only serves the citizens of the county but to also be able to help them in a time of need. The opportunity to meet people that on another job you would have never met, and to have been able to be a part of history and changes in the county. Knowing that when you leave you will have left the county a better place and the people better off.

*continued on p. 22*

# ACCA

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# From the Cover

## Scott Kramer



**What is special about the role of ACCMA members?**

County administrators and managers within

ACCMA interact with city managers and receive a better understanding of local government.

**What is the best part of working in county government?**

Networking with your peers and their willingness to share their wisdom and knowledge.

## Diane Kilpatrick



**How long have you worked in county government?**

18 years

**What is special about the role of county administrators?**

The role of the county administrator in county government is to stay on top of the issues that affect the county and to keep the commissioners informed of upcoming challenges facing the county. The duties and responsibilities of the county administrator may vary from county to county, but each of us has a very important job to do in managing the financial stability of our county. We have to be able to work with all elected officials and department heads within our county to be sure that their needs are met.

**What is the best part of working in county government?**

Feeling like I am part of a very important team of people who are working toward making Butler County a better place for all of the citizens who live here. Butler County is a great place to live and raise a family.

## Chris Champion



**How long have you worked in county government?**

19 years

**What is special about the role of county engineers?**

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# From the Cover

We provide the technical expertise for road and bridge work but we also have to be good managers of resources and people. We manage one of the most visible departments with the largest budget and number of employees in each county. Throw in problem solving and “political” engineering and you can see it takes a special person that can wear several different hats to be a county engineer.

## What is the best part of working in county government?

The relationships. Working as closely as we do with people in our counties and statewide, you develop friendships where others understand and celebrate your successes and can also empathize with your failures. I also appreciate

the spirit of cooperation that exists among county engineers. Anytime I’ve needed assistance or advice, other engineers have always been there with a needed resource or been available for me to pull from their expertise and experience. I’ve tried to reciprocate as well, but I definitely receive more benefit than I offer and am grateful to my colleagues for their assistance.

## Terri A. Henderson

How long have you worked in county government?

CROAA

10 Years

## What is special about the role of county revenue officers?

The County Revenue Officers Association of Alabama (“CROAA”)

provides a forum for its members to discuss all matters of public interest in the collection and enforcement of county revenue. CROAA promotes the proficiency and professionalism of county revenue officers and helps to further the education of member representatives through continuing education programs.

## What is the best part of working in county government?

I enjoy the opportunity to communicate and interact with our taxpayers. I appreciate the opportunity to network with various other county, city and state government representatives across the state specific to sales and use taxes.



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## Counties help guide changes to tax collection process

In about 10 months, the collection of sales taxes in Alabama will change dramatically. And this will dramatically change the relationship between counties, the Alabama Department of Revenue and the retail business community.

The move represents such a significant shift that the Legislature established the State and Local Advisory Committee to work on a centralized collection process for city, county and state sales taxes beginning Oct. 1, 2013.

Known as ONE SPOT (Optional Network Election for Single Point Online Transactions), the project will transform the state internet-based sales tax collection process into a system that will allow businesses to file and remit both state and local sales taxes. For a state often criticized for the “complexity” of its local sales taxes, the ONE SPOT system is intended to more efficiently collect taxes.

Alabama is one of only four states that allow local governments to collect and enforce local sales taxes. As a result, a business with locations in different counties or that delivers products into more than one county must remit sales taxes to each county separately. Alabama’s system also requires businesses, which have worked for changes for years, to determine the appropriate tax rates in each county and to be subject to audits from each county.

The transition to a centralized collection system started with legislation during the 2012 regular session. The Association of County

Commissions of Alabama participated in negotiations and, eventually, did not oppose this new system. The project could move Alabama one step closer to collecting local sales taxes on internet transactions and should allow for the collection of sales taxes that are now going unreported.

“We have a host of hurdles to navigate between now and next October,” said ACCA Executive Director Sonny Brasfield, “but assuming everything comes together this new system could be very positive for county government. It should help not only with internet sales, but also with those sales made by in-state companies that

deliver their products across county lines to a customer’s home.”

The advisory committee is chaired by Shelby County Finance Director Butch Burbage, a former president of the County Revenue Officers Association of Alabama, an ACCA affiliate organization.

“There are so many technical issues to resolve, both from a business as well as a government standpoint,” he said. “The committee is working very well together and we have an enormous amount of work to do.”

*continued on p. 26*



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# News You Can Use

Continued from page 25

During its December meeting, the group focused most of the discussion on the technology that will be used to actually receive payments from business users, the transfer of the tax payments to the bank accounts of the appropriate governmental entities, and a separate – but connected – system that will make payment and compliance data available to county and city officials.

Burbage points out that the “enforcement” of sales taxes will remain a local matter, with each county either conducting its own enforcement activities or contracting for compliance efforts. For this reason, the system’s ability to collect detailed data and then transfer it to the appropriate local government is essential.

“One of the major concerns of local government has been that we will not be able to access the information we need in order to ensure that all businesses are remitting the correct amount of sales taxes to the correct jurisdiction,” Burbage explained. “Our



**Butch Burbage**

ability to provide services on the local level is directly related to the effective collection of all taxes that are correctly due. The businesses are looking for ease of reporting and payment so we have to strike a balance that works for everyone.”

In addition to county representatives Burbage, Montgomery County Revenue Manager Terri Henderson and DeKalb County Administrator Matt Sharp, the committee includes three municipal representatives and two others chosen

by statewide business groups. In addition, the committee includes two other persons who serve in an advisory, non-voting role.

At this year’s ACCA Legislative Conference, county revenue officers met with representatives of the state to discuss the transition and to develop a punch list of issues that need attention before October. With the deadline looming, the state has developed a timeline that includes a bid process for those outside vendors that will provide the services necessary to operate this complex system.

“The role of the committee is to effectively communicate the concerns of both business and government to the Alabama Department of Revenue so it can operate the system on a daily basis,” Burbage concluded. “Our work is really just getting started. We have so many questions to answer if we are to be ready to make such a big switch in less than a year.”

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## Alabama Local Government Training Institute Schedule for 2012-2013

More info: [www.alabamacounties.org/education/commissioners/](http://www.alabamacounties.org/education/commissioners/)

### Jan. 24-25, 2013

Elective: Media Relations and the Open Meetings Law  
Prattville

### Feb. 20-21, 2013

Course 2: Ethical and Legal Issues  
Prattville

### Feb. 21-22, 2013

Course 4: Roads and Bridges  
Prattville

### March 20-21, 2013

Course 3: Financial Administration  
Prattville

### March 21-22, 2013

Elective: Understanding the Liability of the County Commission  
Prattville

### April 4-5, 2013

Elective: Law Enforcement & the County Commission  
Prattville

### April 24-25, 2013

Course 3: Financial Administration  
Prattville

### April 25-26, 2013

Elective: Personnel Administration  
Prattville

### June 6-7, 2013

43rd Alabama County Government Institute  
Auburn

## Education benefits commissioners

County government in Alabama is highly specialized, even compared to other levels and branches of government in the state. That's the reason the Association of County Commissions of Alabama teamed up with Auburn University to form the Alabama Local Government Training Institute.

The schedule of upcoming ALGTI courses is designed to allow the more than 90 new commissioners that took office this year to complete the 50-hour program mandated by state law. The offerings also include four electives that veteran commissioners who have completed the 50-hour program could use to complete the graduate program,

which requires an additional 70 hours of coursework.

For new commissioners, the mandated program begins with their orientation Dec. 4-5. The other required courses are Ethical and Legal Issues, Financial Administration and Roads and Bridges. To finish out the required hours, new commissioners can choose from the following electives: Media Relations and the Open Meetings Law, Understanding the Liability of the County Commission, Law Enforcement and the County Commission or Personnel Administration.

Commissioners who complete either the 50- or 120-hour programs are recognized each year at the ACCA Annual Convention in August.



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## CGEI offers full slate of courses for employees in 2013

There are several noteworthy points about the 2013 schedule for the County Government Education Institute.

Though CGEI is usually thought of as the education program for county employees, a popular class that departs from that is being offered again. The class is called “Disaster Relief 101,” and it is designed specifically as a thorough orientation for people who are not emergency managers.

Because this is an area of interest for elected officials as well as county staff leaders, the class is being opened up for commissioners as well. Commissioners who complete the course will earn elective credit with the Alabama Local Government Training Institute. The class is being offered in 2013 because of the large group of new commissioners elected in 2012.

Another class worth highlighting is “Fundamentals of Emergency Communications Districts,” offered in early April. This is a required course for the certificate in emergency communication administration, and it may not be offered again in the next few years. For 9-1-1 staffers interested in the course, it should also be noted that Alabama Association of 9-1-1 Districts Day @ the Legislature was scheduled for the same week.

For anyone interested in completing a CGEI certification program, the schedule includes three of the basic courses – Overview of County Government, Ethics for Public Officials and Employees as well as Finance and Revenue.

Employees from a variety of county offices are encouraged to earn the basic-level certificate, which will guarantee that they are grounded in essential facts about county government operations.

Details of requirements for the various certificates are available online at [www.alabamacounties.org/education/county-employees/](http://www.alabamacounties.org/education/county-employees/). To check on credits earned, contact Brandy Perry in the ACCA office at 334-263-7594 or [bperry@alabamacounties.org](mailto:bperry@alabamacounties.org).

Online registration is open for all 2013 CGEI classes using [www.alabamacounties.org/events/](http://www.alabamacounties.org/events/).

### County Government Education Institute 2013 Schedule

For more info: <http://www.alabamacounties.org/education/county-employees/>

**January 16-17**, Finance and Revenue

**March 13-14**, Ethics for Public Officials and Employees

**April 10-11**, Fundamentals of Emergency Communications Districts

**May 29-30**, Legal Primer: County Roads

**June 19-20**, Overview of County Government

**October 16-17**, Disaster Relief 101

**November 13-14**, Communications and Media Relations

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## Support for county jails to continue through 2013

The insurance funds of the Association of County Commissions of Alabama have been investing in county jails, and the assistance has been well received and will continue in 2013.

Already ACCA has provided much of the training at the Alabama Jail Association's October conference. That event was attended by nearly 200 county jail personnel – from jail administrators to correctional officers – representing 54 counties.

The training featured experts from the National Institute for Jail Operations and Randy McNeill, a lawyer at the Montgomery firm Webb & Eley



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who is an expert on jail defense, and participants gave positive evaluations to the classes. Topics included legal issues, use of force and testifying techniques.

“I hope this is just the start our partnership to provide jail training on a continuous basis to the staff of the Alabama county jails,” said John Hamm, ACCA’s director of member services.

Another initiative is the Alabama Legal-Based Guidelines, an online legal tool that helps align jail policies and procedures with the latest court rulings. The guidelines are available to fund members at no cost.

Through the fall, ACCA organized training sessions to help jail officials learn how to use the guidelines and conduct a self-audit of existing jail policies and procedures. These trainings were attended by about 100 people representing 30 counties. A third of those counties have begun using the guidelines, and five more are in the pipeline.

Many counties are members of the ACCA Self-Insurance Funds for liability or workers’ compensation coverage. The funds help counties finance and manage risk through effective claims management, strong loss control services, exceptional legal representation and sound investment policy.

Jails are expensive for counties to insure, even in a self-insurance fund. In the liability fund alone, law enforcement represents roughly half the open claims – some \$10 million in expected probable costs.

That’s one reason that jail training has been included in the funds’ Safety Incentive Discount Program. Launched

in 2012, the program outlines a set of requirements for counties to meet in order to qualify for an insurance discount. For the participants in 2012, discounts could total \$285,000 in the liability fund and \$386,000 in the workers’ compensation fund, for a grand total of \$671,000.

Looking ahead to 2013, this area will remain a priority for the funds. There is again a Safety Incentive Discount Program (details at [www.bit.ly/accasidp](http://www.bit.ly/accasidp)) that requires training for jail staff,

though the training requirement is expanded to include deputies as well.

This training will be offered in conjunction with the Alabama Jail Association. The first event is scheduled for March 27-18 in Huntsville and will focus on medical issues. The October conference will again be at the beach in Baldwin County. More information about these training opportunities will be made available to counties as soon as possible.

Training materials are available to members of ACCA’s Self-Insurance Funds at <http://www.alabamacounties.org/insurance/resources/law-enforcement/>. Fund members with password questions should contact John Hamm at [jhamm@alabamacounties.org](mailto:jhamm@alabamacounties.org).

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## 2012 AUCTION SCHEDULE

**11TH ANNUAL SPRINGTIME CONTRACTORS EQUIPMENT & TRUCK AUCTION • PHILADELPHIA, MISSISSIPPI  
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 28<sup>th</sup> THRU FRIDAY, MARCH 30<sup>th</sup> • 2012**

**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**

**HUGE 2-DAY CONTRACTORS EQUIPMENT & TRUCK AUCTION • PHILADELPHIA, MISSISSIPPI  
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 14<sup>th</sup> & THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 15<sup>th</sup> • 2012**



Auctioneers: Donnie W Dean, AL. Lic. 907, MS Lic. 733, FL Lic. AU847, GA Lic. NR001618; LA Lic. 1598, TX Lic. 00013668; Wes Dean, AL Lic 5219

## CROAA awards highlight excellence in field

The County Revenue Officers Association of Alabama gave out two awards in 2012 to recognize the professional accomplishments of members.

Betty Peterson, director of the Madison County Sales Tax Department, was honored with the County Revenue Officer of the Year award.

Over the past year, Peterson served faithfully as a county representative on the Streamlined Sales and Use Tax Commission.

She earned a master's degree in business administration and holds the certified county revenue officer designation.

She also serves as board chairman for the Alabama Local Tax Institute of Standards and Training.

Tuscaloosa County staff member Kirk Keith received the award for Outstanding Contribution to the County Revenue Officers Association of Alabama.

Keith is manager of the Tuscaloosa County Special Tax Board, and he has worked for the county for 15 years.

He earned an accounting degree from the University of Alabama, and he holds professional certifications as a revenue examiner and revenue officer.

He was CROAA president 2006-2008 and has served the organization on numerous committees.

He also serves on the Alabama Local Tax Institute of Standards and Training board.



*Madison County's Betty Peterson, left, accepts the County Revenue Officers Association of Alabama's Revenue Officer of the Year award from CROAA President Terri Henderson, right.*



*Tuscaloosa County's Kirk Keith, left, accepts the County Revenue Officers Association of Alabama's award for Outstanding Contribution to CROAA from CROAA President Terri Henderson, right.*

CROAA exists to promote the proficiency and professionalism of county revenue officers who oversee collection of a variety of local taxes ranging from sales taxes to lodging taxes to license fees.

The association organizes professional development opportunities and provides a unified voice in Montgomery on legislative issues.

It is an affiliate of the Association of County Commissions of Alabama.



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*President*

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