

COUNTY COMMISSION

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CORRECTIONS at a CROSSROADS

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in this issue

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There are anything but blue skies ahead for Alabama's prison system, which is closely connected to the county jails. That's why ACCA has chosen to focus the 2014 Annual Convention on "Corrections at a Crossroads."



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President's Corner



*Hon. Debbie Wood
President*

Debbie Wood

ACCA insurance programs make big impact at home, across country

Reinsurance meeting
gave new appreciation
for programs widely
used in Alabama

After 10 years in office as a county commissioner, you should know just about everything there is to know about the Association. Right? Then you become president and you realize that there is so much more than you ever realized.

I was reminded of that again just a few weeks ago when I saw first-hand the Association's role in a national company that ensures the financial integrity of our two important insurance funds and similar programs around the country. I suspect most of you know as little about this part of our Association's "service" as I did.

The Association's two insurance funds – which provide workers' compensation and liability protection for counties, officials and employees – are part of a Vermont-based insurance corporation that provides access to reinsurance to protect the financial integrity of our two programs. Perhaps not the most exciting news, but our role in this organization again illustrates our leadership in Alabama and nationally.

In early May the board of directors of the company, County Reinsurance Limited (CRL), met here in Alabama. This session attracted county association officials from states across the country, including Texas, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, New Mexico and Arkansas – just to name a few.

Established almost two decades ago, the organization allows county insurance funds to pool their collective resources to access reinsurance that covers the cost of catastrophic events or horrible workplace injuries. These events are the kinds of things that would place our insurance programs

at risk were it not for the access to reinsurance from CRL.

Before you start with the "why do I care?" responses, let me explain what I learned during the meeting.

Our counties benefit from the financial strength of our insurance funds. We have money to emphasize safety by providing training programs, like the "free" employment training set for this fall at four locations around the state. We have money to provide on-site safety inspections, establish incentive programs, provide safety refunds to counties, make driving simulators available throughout the state and create a statewide computer system to be used in our jails.

We have the stability to provide refunds to the participants in our liability program this year that are equal to almost 30 percent of this year's total premiums and to provide a refund to participants in the workers' compensation program during every year of its existence.

We have the resources that allow all of us access to the best legal representation in the state. We also have the resources to get daily advice through our Association and our external legal team, almost always without incurring any additional costs.

The reinsurance meeting gave new appreciation for widely used programs here in Alabama. Those of us charged with making the management decisions for the insurance programs know very little about CRL and its operation, but we know that the long-term future of our funds is protected through this company.

The financial stability of our funds allows us to conduct programs and provide services that simply would not be possible without the services of CRL.

CRL is a member-owned reinsurance company, and it was formed in 1997 by several county associations that operated their own self-insured pools and understood the benefits of pooling. Along with the critical help of the National Association of Counties and state association executives, these founding members formed the nation's first exclusive reinsurer for county insurance pools.

We all understand the benefits of pooling our resources to establish an insurance effort that is operated by and for counties. The same concept applies to CRL. The members of that company are our two pools and the pools of our "sister" organizations throughout the country. We all understand that our

collective interests are best protected when we work together.

The company was originally established at a time when county insurance pools were at the mercy of the big insurance reinsurers.

The existence of CRL means our programs – and those like ours around the nation – can depend on each other and can rely on our collective strength.

On a regular basis, CRL provides our staff with assistance and also evaluates the activities of our two pools and the reserving services provided by Meadowbrook. This external look at our operations is invaluable to our staff and insurance boards. And, is another reason you can have confidence that the

insurance programs are providing you the best possible service.

Our executive director serves as secretary of the corporation and is a member of the board of directors.

The other members of the board include insurance pool directors from throughout the country as well as Gene Terry, executive director of the Texas Association of Counties, and David Thompson, executive director of the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners.

And all of this activity, occurring largely without the knowledge of most county commissioners – or me until recently – is another reason why I'm so honored to serve as your president and to be a small part of "67 Counties. One Voice."

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Sonny Brasfield
Executive Director

Sonny Brasfield

Mix of history, basic science needed to make sense of reform's failure in 2014

Forward progress on
constitutional reform
blocked by friction
within county government

Often it is easier to understand a subject – such as the behind-the-scenes maneuvering during a session of the Alabama Legislature – by looking back into history. Way back.

Such is the case, I believe, with the activities that led to the demise of constitutional reform during the 2014 session.

Before we begin, we'll put on the record that the confusing actions of some during the waning days of the 2014 session have served only to delay constitutional change in our state – they have not defeated it.

But for those committed to seeing actual change finally come in our state, it might be helpful to learn from a little history.

And, for that, we'll need to wander back to about 350 B.C.

It was during that age when the Greek philosopher Aristotle first introduced the notion that eventually led to the concept we know today as “inertia.”

Aristotle believed that objects at rest remain at rest unless a force acts upon them to create movement. He also believed that objects in motion do not remain in motion unless the force causing the motion remains constant.

The basis of this theory turned out to be correct, but he did miss the boat just a bit.

Later Sir Isaac Newton would be credited with putting the final touches on what is known as the first of his

three laws of motion when he wrote, “Every object in a state of uniform motion tends to remain in that state of motion unless an external force is applied to it.”

Between Aristotle's original thought and Newton's law, there was a scientific fact uncovered by someone else that really explains why constitutional reform failed again in 2014.

About 1,800 years after Aristotle and just a few decades before Newton, it was Galileo who found fault with the original view that an object stays in motion only BECAUSE an outside force produces its movement.

He believed something else – a little detail called “friction” – was the real external force that caused moving objects to stop their motion. Without friction, he believed, an object placed into motion would continue to stay in motion for an unlimited time.

Now, here's the illustration that will bring us back to present-day constitutional reform.

A block of wood (representing constitutional reform) placed on a table remains still on the table unless someone begins to push the block across the surface of the table.

Now, Aristotle would have predicted that the block of wood would move across the table top ONLY as long as something continued to push that block. When the pushing stops, Aristotle wrote, the movement stops

It was actually an association of county elected officials that generated enough friction to defeat the constitutional reform aimed at giving the citizens a more responsive county government.

because it is the pushing that produces the movement.

But Galileo modified that vision slightly by detecting that the friction between the block of wood and the table is the real reason that movement stops.

Without this friction – without the impact of the friction between the immovable table and the moving block of wood – an object would move even if a hand was no longer pushing it.

Over the years, the group that represents Alabama's farming and property interests has always been blamed for the "friction" that has stopped constitutional change.

So, one can understand the optimism that existed when the Board of Directors of the Alabama Farmers Federation, often called Alfa for short, agreed not to oppose some constitutional revision in 2014 aimed at reducing reliance on local laws in Alabama. For so long, everyone thought it was Alfa that was playing the part of the "table" in Galileo's explanation of why objects stop their forward progress.

Who would have believed that Newton's "external" force that would spell defeat for reform would not be "external" at all – but would come from those INSIDE county government itself?

But that's exactly what happened in the last days of the 2014 session.

A constitutional reform bill discussed for more than 18 months by a statewide commission, a bill that was the subject

of three public hearings in the Alabama Senate, a bill that was introduced more than five weeks before it was moved to the Senate floor for a vote – that bill was opposed by an association representing county officials because, the officials claimed, they were unaware that the bill even existed.

After the bill was passed by the Senate, those same elected officials turned the friction up a couple of notches with e-mails and verbal assaults against this Association and its leadership.

The friction wasn't confined to the wording of the bill but was expanded to unreasonable and unwarranted personal attacks that, eventually, resulted in the Legislature deciding that the reform efforts should wait for another year.

The defeat of constitutional reform is not news. That's happened over and over again in our state. But, when the smoke has cleared every year, those seeking reform have always pointed the finger of blame at Alfa.

That can occur no more. Through the leadership of its new president, Jimmy

Parnell, that organization actively worked to find middle ground that could produce forward movement on an issue that has held this state behind its neighbors for decades.

The reform passed by the Alabama Senate late in the 2014 session did so with the cooperation of Alfa.

The turn of events we watched would have probably left Aristotle, Galileo and Newton scratching their heads. It was actually an association of county elected officials that generated enough friction to defeat the constitutional reform aimed at giving the citizens a more responsive county government.

Those interested in constitutional reform can find solace in Newton's explanation of inertia. He concluded that an object at rest does not stay at rest forever – but moves again when "an external force is applied to it."

As reformers now turn their attention to 2015, they have a pretty good idea who's causing the friction that stands between Alabama and some real progress.

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Mary E. Pons
Association Counsel

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

Revisions to 'Prompt Pay' law not likely to trouble counties

Counties will need to
update some steps in
bidding process under
public works law

In 2011, the Alabama Legislature enacted changes to the public works law that, among other things, required awarding authorities to make payment to the contractor within 45 days of approving an invoice.

You may recall that the Association opposed this “prompt pay” legislation as introduced and was successful in slowing its passage until, through negotiation and agreement by the bill sponsors, changes were made that would not unduly harm counties and other governmental entities.

One such change made in the 2011 legislation was language to ensure that, if the source of funds for a project came from a grant, award or direct reimbursement from the state, federal government or other source, the awarding authority would not be required to submit payment until those funds were received by the contracting governmental entity.

Before the ink was dry on the governor’s signature, those groups which pushed for the “prompt pay” law began work on legislation to “undo” the changes agreed to in 2011, and for the next three years, county government fought hard against efforts to remove the exemption in the law allowing payment on grant projects only after the grant monies were received.

The bill was pre-filed in 2014 (HB 24) so the fight began early. The bill was stalled for much of the 2014 session because of county opposition, but during the last days of the session,

the bill sponsors sat down with Association staff and representatives from the Alabama Department of Transportation to work on the problem areas in this bill. And as a result of those very amicable negotiations, a compromise bill was passed with little to no opposition and has now been signed into law. See Act 2014-404.

The Association greatly appreciates the cooperative efforts of Sen. Marsh and Rep. Roberts in working to find language that would make counties comfortable with this legislation. And we also appreciate the strong support from the many House and Senate members who came to the microphone on the floor to make sure counties were OK before agreeing to allow passage of this bill.

In the end, the new law (which takes effect on July 1, 2014) should not cause undue harm to counties or other governmental entities contracting for public works projects.

But there will be some important changes in procedures that need to be implemented and carefully followed. The most important changes are set out below.

Act 2014-404 amends the public works law to reduce time frames for payment of invoices from 45 days to 35 days after acceptance of the invoice by the awarding authority.

For partial payments in ongoing projects other than those funded by grants, a person designated in the contract to review the progress of completed work and invoices

There are new and important procedures to follow under Act 2014-404 for projects funded with a grant, award or direct reimbursement from the state, federal government or other source.

shall have 10 days to review a submission and respond in writing either acknowledging acceptance of the invoice or outlining errors or disputes. See Ala. Code § 39-2-12(b). If errors or disputes are transmitted to the contractor, the invoice may be resubmitted once those errors or disputes are resolved. However, where there is no error or dispute, the awarding authority shall proceed within 10 days for payment of the invoice in accordance with the requirements and deadlines in the law.

Procedures for final payment of projects not funded by grant monies or the like were not altered in Act 2014-404, except that, as with partial payments, an approved invoice shall be paid within 35 days after all requirements such as advertising and release of all liens have been fulfilled.

As in the 2011 version of the law, interest accrues following the 35th day. And, as in current law, the contract cannot alter these statutory provisions.

There are new and important procedures to follow under Act 2014-404 for projects funded with a grant, award or direct reimbursement from the state, federal government or other source. First of all, the awarding authority cannot begin the bidding process unless it has received confirmation of funding and any required matching funds have been secured or are available. See Ala. Code § 39-2-2(i). Additionally, where the funds will not become available until

after the contract is executed, the bid specifications – and the contract – must specifically state that fact. See Ala. Code § 39-2-12(l).

The invoice review process outlined above applies to grant projects as well, except that once an invoice for partial payment is approved, the awarding authority shall forward the request to the entity or agency that is the source of funding for the project. Additionally – and most importantly – payment on the project shall not be due until the awarding authority is in receipt of the funds. However, once funds are received, the awarding authority shall process payment to the contractor within 10 days.

There is one other minor change in law under Act 2014-404. Ala. Code § 39-2-2(h) now provides that if a pre-bid meeting will be held, it must occur at least seven days before the bid opening except when an emergency has been declared. This new requirement may actually benefit counties and other awarding authorities.

The process to get where we are has been frustrating and sometimes bloody. In the end, however, the newest public works law changes should not cause any real problems for counties. And hopefully counties and contractors can now work together to make sure the law is followed and there are no new efforts to fix a process that is not broken.



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Legislature passes 7 county-backed bills

The 2014 Regular Session started early and ended even earlier than expected, but when all was said and done, seven of ACCA's priority bills had become law. What's more, many other new laws were modified to protect county government, and some harmful proposals did not pass at all this year.

Each of these new laws will advance county government in Alabama, and together they accomplish much to both respond to current needs as well as address other needs in a forward-looking fashion.

"I am extremely proud of the Association's legislative accomplishments this year," said Executive Director Sonny Brasfield. "Members throughout the state worked hard to ensure that legislators understood the significant issues for counties, and those efforts paid off handsomely. The staff and I do everything we can to help officials and employees make an impact, but we are well aware these results would not be possible without the relationships lawmakers have with their constituents back home."

Even as he thanked county leaders around the state, Brasfield reminded them to make sure they followed up with their legislators after the session ended. "Now is the time to say 'thank you' to your state senators and representatives who listened to your concerns throughout the session, and we especially want to thank the legislators

who successfully sponsored bills for ACCA this year."

A complete review of the session with links to the new laws is available online at www.alabamacounties.org/?p=6008.



Sen. Bussman



Rep. Roberts

Annual Tax Levy

Act 2014-433 (SB 400 by Sen. Paul Bussman and Rep. Bill Roberts)

This act, one of the final bills passed during the 2014 legislative session, amends antiquated law requiring county commissions to set the property tax levy each year at their first meetings in February.

Under the new law, each county commission will be required to set the tax levy at its first meeting in February 2015, and counties will not have to repeat that step unless the tax rate changes.

The law also ratifies all prior tax levies regardless of their timing.

This law is intended to help to resolve pending and threatened lawsuits against county commissions for failing to set the levy at their first February meeting. Effective April 10, 2014.



Rep. McCutcheon



Sen. Orr

Local Government Health Insurance Program

Act 2014-401 (HB 136 by Rep. Mac McCutcheon/Rep. Mike Hill and Sen. Arthur Orr)

This act creates a separate governing



Rep. Hill

board for the Local Government Health Insurance Program, which provides coverage for employees of 50 counties. The

program, funded entirely by Alabama local governments and their employees, has always been governed by the same board that oversees the program for state employees, even though there are no local government representatives on that board.

Under the new law, local government representatives will make decisions about the program's future. ACCA will appoint three county representatives to the board, and there will be a county or municipal employee elected by full-time county and municipal employees. This legislation was strongly supported by the State Employees' Health Insurance Program, whose staff will continue to

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administer the program. Effective April 9, 2014, with the new board taking over Oct. 1, 2015.



Rep. Clouse



Sen. Fielding

State Refund Tax Offset

Act 2014-321 (HB 82 by Rep. Steve Clouse and Sen. Jerry Fielding)

This act creates a new debt recovery process for counties and other local government entities. Counties will be

able to access a taxpayer's state income tax refund to cover debts owed the county. This should be extremely helpful with collecting delinquent solid waste fees as well as other sums owed to the county, and the program has worked well in other states. ACCA will provide this service to counties and handle these transactions with the Alabama Department of Revenue. The goal is to have a working program in place for tax returns filed in 2015 for the 2014 tax year. Effective July 1, 2014.

Business Personal Property Taxes

Act 2014-415 (HB 108 by former Rep. Greg Wren and Sen. Slade Blackwell)

This act streamlines the business personal property taxation process to

the advantage of both taxpayers and tax recipients. The new law establishes an online system and a short form for



Sen. Blackwell

businesses filing returns where the total value of personal property is less than \$10,000. This new process will make filing easier and likely increase compliance

and revenues. The passage of this bill was a joint effort of the business community, county government, and ADOR. The law requires ADOR to create the short form for filing prior to Oct. 1, 2014, for use in the fiscal year beginning on that date. The law also



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requires ADOR to set up the online filing system no later than Sept. 30, 2016, and it creates a committee to provide advice on development of the system. County government will be well represented on this committee with one county commissioner and one probate judge/chair serving along with four local tax officials. Effective July 1, 2014.



Sen. Marsh

Rep. Williams

Collection of 9-1-1 Fees

Act 2014-431 (SB 317 by Sen. Del Marsh and Rep. Jack Williams)

This act clarifies that the 9-1-1 fee shall be collected on “Lifeline” cellular phones and codifies the administrative rule on how to set the number of lines assessed the 9-1-1 fee at each business location.

This bill was initially considered a “danger” bill because of proposed changes to the statewide 9-1-1 board and a cut to the number of lines charged the fee at each business location. However, negotiations among ACCA staff, AAND members, and the telecommunication companies that collect the 9-1-1 fee resulted in very positive changes which should generate additional revenues that will keep the fee charged to phone users as low as possible. Effective April 10, 2014.



Sen. Allen

Rep. Shedd

State EMA Property Donation

Act 2014-72 (SB 149 by Sen. Gerald Allen and Rep. Randall Shedd)

This act allows the Alabama Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) to offer a local emergency management agency any used or obsolete equipment, supplies or material through sale, gift, grant or loan.

The property must be used for emergency management, but unless specifically provided otherwise at the time of the transfer to the local agency, the property may be disposed of as determined by the local governing body. Any loaned property shall be returned to AEMA as determined by the state agency. Effective Feb. 25, 2014.



Rep. Wood

Sen. Reed

Public Safety Communication

Act 2014-239 (HB 54 by Rep. Randy Wood and Sen. Greg Reed)

This act creates the crime of interfering with public safety communication,

See a complete review of the 2014 session including links to new laws at www.alabamacounties.org/?p=6008

defined in the act as any radio signal, electronic transmission, telephone communication, or broadcast intended for emergency personnel acting in an official capacity. The law specifically includes 9-1-1 personnel and equipment. Under the new act, it will be a Class C felony to knowingly or intentionally damage, tamper with, destroy, or render inoperable such communication. Effective June 1, 2014.

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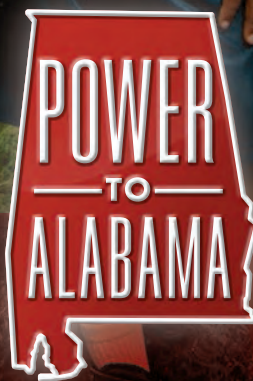
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Safety efforts pay total dividends of \$454,000

A yearlong effort across Alabama to provide safer workplaces and reduce injuries has produced dividends for 46 county commissions, which have received cash awards from the Association of County Commissions of Alabama.

ACCA's Safety Incentive Discount Program, administered by its two self-funded insurance programs, rewards counties for on-going efforts to enhance training for employees in safety-sensitive positions, improve driver safety and produce a work environment focused on accident prevention.

The awards totaled \$454,000 statewide this year. Amounts for individual counties are based on that county's annual premium and the level of participation in safety activities.

Requirements ranged from establishing local safety policies and committees to actively participating in hands-on safety training for law enforcement, engineering departments, personnel management and public officials.

"We are extremely pleased that so many counties have embraced the philosophy of actively reducing those factors that lead to injuries and property loss," said ACCA Executive Director Sonny Brasfield. "It is important that proactive steps be taken to reduce the likelihood of events."

Brasfield explained that it is impossible to eliminate all incidents but these counties' willingness to emphasize loss-prevention can only lead to an avoidance of those events that are preventable.

Once people begin to think about safety, then you turn your attention to specific tasks and to providing spot-on training that can equip employees with the knowledge necessary to make the correct decisions. —Sonny Brasfield

He pointed to the use of seat belts, eliminating texting while driving, active review of work areas for safety risks and proactive training opportunities as some of the key factors in reducing losses.

"The most significant issue is to raise awareness of those activities or behaviors that increase the risk of injury," Brasfield concluded. "Once people begin to think about safety, then you turn your attention to specific tasks and to providing spot-on training that can equip employees with the knowledge necessary to make the correct decisions."

The following county commissions received awards through the Safety Incentive Discount Program: Autauga, Baldwin, Barbour, Bibb, Blount,

Calhoun, Chambers, Cherokee, Chilton, Choctaw, Clay, Cleburne, Colbert, Coosa, Covington, Crenshaw, Cullman, Dale, Dallas, DeKalb, Escambia, Etowah, Franklin, Geneva, Greene, Hale, Henry, Houston, Jackson, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Lee, Limestone, Macon, Marengo, Marshall, Monroe, Morgan, Perry, Pickens, Pike, Randolph, St. Clair, Sumter, Washington and Wilcox.

The Association's insurance programs, which provide services to injured county employees and that provide liability protection for employees and officials, are managed by boards of trustees. These insurance programs offer coverage that is custom-tailored to counties, and county leaders serving as trustees make sure of it.

The Association is the state's only organization representing county government and providing comprehensive services to enhance the effective and efficient delivery of services at the local level.

Members of ACCA's insurance programs who have questions about the next Safety Incentive Discount Program should contact Henry van Arcken, ACCA's director of insurance services, at 334-263-7594 or hvanarcken@alabamacounties.org. County commissions and other county entities interested in joining ACCA's liability or workers' compensation insurance programs can contact van Arcken or Sonny Brasfield, also at the same phone number or sbrasfield@alabamacounties.org.

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From the Cover

CORRECTIONS at a CROSSROADS

***Much at stake for
counties when
Alabama starts to
reform struggling
corrections system***

Almost a quarter of a century ago, Alabama counties sought court relief from massive overcrowding conditions in jails throughout the state. Despite a clear state law that placed the responsibility for the housing and care of state inmates squarely on the Alabama Department of Corrections, as many as 2,000 state inmates were backed up in county jails.

Alabama sheriffs were forced to hold state prisoners at the local level while they waited for the state intake officer to call, saying DOC would accept delivery of specific inmates. After years of negotiation and discussions, counties took a drastic step and, through several sheriffs, filed suit against the commissioner of the Alabama Department of Corrections.

The original litigation began in Montgomery Circuit Court in 1991. After many twists and turns, in 2003 the matter found its way to the Alabama Supreme Court. Eventually, beginning in October 2006, the court ordered Alabama sheriffs to deliver prisoners to the Alabama Department of Corrections within 30 days after receipt of the transcript of the inmate's trial.

From the Cover

In that court order, Montgomery County Circuit Judge William Shashy wrote, “The Court must wonder what chaos would be unleashed on this State and its citizens if the sheriffs” refused to accept “the very same inmates the DOC is refusing to house.”

The court concluded that a sheriff who turned away a prisoner would “face severe public criticism, would be accused of dereliction of duty and could even



face criminal penalties and imprisonment themselves for failing to perform their duty.” The department, he wrote, had chosen to balance its budget by simply holding prisoners at an arm’s length in the various county jails.

Shashy’s order provided for a transition period, since at that time almost 1,000 state inmates were in county jails more than 30 days after the proper paperwork had been delivered to DOC. To cope with the influx, the state used housing facilities outside the state, expanded DOC capacity by converting common areas to sleeping quarters and established a second parole docket to expedite the release of inmates.

As the litigation made its way through the legal hornets’ nest, the case drew countless headlines. Several sheriffs delivered prisoners to the DOC intake center in Montgomery without prior approval. Most notably, two bus-loads of prisoners were transferred without notice to the state by Houston County’s then-Sheriff Lamar Glover, who threatened to handcuff the inmates to the state facility’s fence. These steps helped focus attention on the litigation and, eventually, helped secure the order that has stood since 2006.

“In the last eight years, the Association has received a weekly count of the number of ‘state’ inmates in county jails,” explained ACCA Executive Director Sonny Brasfield. “The Department of Corrections has worked tirelessly to follow that 2006 order and has been extremely sensitive to the problems state inmates have caused at the local level.”

Because of ACCA efforts, there have also been improvements over the years to healthcare for state inmates under the county’s roof. Now the state will reimburse the county for medical costs, and if the medical costs will exceed \$2,000, the state will take the inmate out of the county jail within three days of notification.

But, Brasfield concluded, every day counties walk a very thin line. “Honestly, it would only take six months of inattention, or some change in Alabama law, and we’d be back in another crisis situation. That is why we are so concerned about the issue of prison reform and the details of any legislation that might be introduced in the 2015 session.”



Corrections at a Crossroads

ACCA’s 86th Annual Convention

Aug. 19-21, 2014

**Perdido Beach Resort
Orange Beach, Ala.**

- See pages 18-19 for tentative agenda

- To register and find out more, go to www.alabamacounties.org

2014 Convention Agenda

ACCA 86th Annual Convention

August 19-21, 2014

Perdido Beach Resort, Orange Beach, Ala.



Monday, August 18

1 p.m.

Golf Tournament (*Lunch at Noon*)

Gulf Shores Golf Club

1 - 7 p.m.

Fishing Expedition

Reel Surprise Charter Docks

Tuesday, August 19

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

- One Spot...One Year Later
- New Nexus Rule
- Changes to the Taxpayer Bill of Rights
- What's on the Horizon
- 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 20

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

- **Prison Reform: If We Fail to Act,** *Council on State Governments (invited)*
- **Pressure on Prisons,** *John Speir, Ph. D., Applied Research Services, Inc.*

- **State of the Alabama Prison System,** *Kim Thomas, Commissioner, Alabama Department of Corrections*
- **A Look at Lower Cost Solutions: Community Corrections and Drug Courts,** *Jeffery Williams, Deputy Commissioner, Alabama Department of Corrections*
- **Too Many for Too Little: State Woes Weigh on County Jails,** *Larry Amerson, Sheriff, Calhoun County and Mark Culver, Houston County Commission Chairman*
- **Remarks from NACo President Riki Hokama** (*invited*)
- Report of the ACCA Nominating Committee

12 - 1:15 p.m.

County Agents Kitchen Lunch

1:30 - 4:45 p.m.

Concurrent Sessions

- **Providing Services to Veterans in Your Community,** *Stan Batemon, St. Clair County Commission Chairman, and Mary Bell, NACo Financial Services Director*
- **Citizens Academy Success Stories,** *David Money, Chairman/ Probate Judge, Henry County, and Chance Corbett, Russell County Commissioner*
- **Revenue Protection on Property Taxes for Subsidized Housing,** *Don Armstrong, Shelby County Revenue Commissioner*

CORRECTIONS at a CROSSROADS

- **Breaking Down the SEC's Municipal Bond Self-Reporting Initiative**, *Alston Ray, Attorney, Butler Snow*
- **Q&A on Insurance Coverage Issues**, *ACCA Staff*
- **Open Meetings Law Refresher**, *Mary Pons, ACCA Association Counsel*
- **PLAN—Practical Leadership Action Network**, *ACCA Staff*

Thursday, August 21

7:45 - 8:45 a.m.

County Agents Kitchen Breakfast

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

Breakout Sessions

Commissioners Breakout Session

- **Mental Health Services in County Jails**, *Jon Garlic, Mental Health Officer, Calhoun County*
- **Liability Considerations When Housing City Inmates in County Jails**, *Ken Webb, Attorney, Webb & Eley, PC*
- **Report from North Jackson**, *Sonny Brasfield, ACCA Executive Director*

Commissioners and Engineers Combined Breakout Session (after the break)

- **ATRIP Update**, *Ed Austin, ALDOT*
- **Road Vacation and Subdivision Regulations**, *Mary Pons, ACCA Association Counsel*

- **Improving Safety at Railroad Crossings**, *Speaker TBA*

Engineers Breakout Session (before the break)

- **Legislative Update (Call Before You Dig, Advertising for Bids, Prompt Pay)**, *Mary Pons, ACCA Association Counsel*
- **Storage Tank Trust Fund Reimbursement Guidelines**, *James Thrash, ADEM*
- **Update on Logging Notification**, *Speaker TBA*

Engineers combine with Commissioners after the break

Administrators and CROAA Breakout Session (before the break)

- **Department of Revenue Update** *Commissioner Julie Magee*
 - Tax Tribunal
 - Suspension of Taxes
 - Business License
 - Business Personal Property Tax
 - Business Rapid Response to Declared Disasters Act

AAEM Breakout Session

- **Future of EMA**, *Sonny Brasfield, ACCA Executive Director*
- **What We Learned from the Ice Storms**, *Speaker TBA*

- **New Commissioner Handbook**, *Phyllis Little, Cullman County EMA Director*

AAND Breakout Session

- **Legislative Update**, *ACCA Staff*
- **Future of 911 in Alabama**, *Sonny Brasfield, ACCA Executive Director*
- **ANGEN Update**, *Speaker TBA*

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

- **Generational Challenges in the Workplace**, *William Sauser, Ph.D., Professor of Management and Higher Education, Auburn University*

12 - 1:15 p.m.

Convention Luncheon Honoring 2013-2014 President Debbie Wood

1:30 - 4:45 p.m.

Afternoon General Session

- **Candidates for Governor, Lt. Governor and Attorney General**
- Awards Ceremony
- ACCA Business Session
- District Caucuses

6:30 p.m.

President's Banquet Honoring 2014-2015 President-Elect Merceria Ludgood

8 p.m.

President's Inaugural Celebration Dance, *Featuring The Tip Tops*

State decisions on prisons could cost counties

It's not just a convention slogan — there's no doubt that Alabama's prison system really is at a crossroads.

A crisis in Alabama's aging and bulging prison system is not exactly "breaking news."

We've all heard those cries before. But as the 2015 legislative session marches ever closer state leaders seem to be surprisingly aware of the crossroads they face: fix the prison system themselves or watch the federal government hold the reins for the next several years.

State officials have taken the first step toward resolving the crisis on their own terms, by calling in at least two groups of outside experts for help and setting up a new 26-member Prison Reform Task Force.

"The worst thing county government could do would be to sit on the sidelines and wait for a new bunch of recommendations to be handed down," said Sonny Brasfield, executive director of the Association of County Commissions of Alabama. "Big changes are looming, and experience tells us that even the most minor of adjustments in the state prison system means major change at the local level. County leaders and this Association must be actively engaged in this reform process from the outset."

One part of that effort will be engaging with the Prison Reform Task Force.

County representation on the panel includes John Hamm, ACCA's director of member services, who has been a sheriff, worked as an administrator in DOC and run community corrections

for one of Alabama's larger counties.

How big is the challenge?

- Alabama would have to reduce its population by nearly 7,000 inmates to attain a level of overcrowding that the courts have said is acceptable in a similarly situated state.

- Federal officials have active interventions into corrections systems going in nearly half of the states. That list already includes Alabama, where recent attention has been focused on alleged sexual misconduct at the state's women's facility.

- The flow of new inmates into the system has not dropped off, and the state is already operating under a 2006 court order to ensure that state inmates are transferred out of county jails and into a Department of Corrections facility in a timely fashion.

- DOC is supported by the cash-strapped state General Fund budget.

When other states have reached this point, it's not uncommon for the solutions put forth to shift the burden to counties.

Alabama counties should not bear the brunt of this, even if they could. And how could they, when jails already account for a significant portion of spending every year? In one county with an annual general fund budget nearing \$25 million, the county jail takes \$1 out of every \$5 in that budget.

Many other states around the southeast have already worked through many of these issues, said John Speir, co-founder of Applied Research Services Inc., an Atlanta-based firm that provided data analysis for one of Alabama's several attempts at reform during the last 15 years.

One shorthand way of looking at the prison population is to divide it into two groups — people you are afraid of and people you are mad at, he said.

The "afraid of" group is for violent criminals, and there's usually broad agreement that those are the people you want locked up.

It is tougher to deal with the "mad at" group, generally filled with people convicted of property and drug crimes. "Your state hasn't been able to find any consensus on what to do with that population," Speir said.



"State of the Alabama Prison System"

9:45 a.m., Wed., Aug. 20

Commissioner Kim Thomas, Alabama Department of Corrections



"Pressure on Prisons"

9:15 a.m., Wed., Aug. 20

John Speir, Ph.D., Applied Research Services Inc.



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Community corrections, one likely solution

Today, Community Corrections programs operate in most Alabama counties – serving to provide alternatives to traditional incarceration, to reduce overcrowding in Alabama’s prison system and to help offenders reintegrate into society. As state leaders search for viable alternatives to new prison construction, some will certainly tout Drug Courts and other community corrections efforts as important parts of a comprehensive solution. County Commission magazine posed a few questions to Jeffery Williams, Alabama Department of Corrections’ deputy commissioner with responsibility for these programs.

Q: If the “textbook” definition of community corrections is “a community-based program that provides supervision for residential and/or non-residential offenders, to include programs and services to aid in the reintegration of the offender into the community,” would you flesh that out a little and provide some examples?

A: Alabama has struggled with the use of sentencing options ranging from minimally supervised probation to imprisonment. Historically Alabama judges have had only these two options. Community-based corrections programs seek to add more dimensions in sentencing that fall somewhere between the two extremes, with an emphasis on rehabilitation and punishment. Through the use of community punishment and corrections programs, local judicial officials have greater control over elements of the sentences imposed. The primary focus is to ensure protection to the public, with a safe reentry into the community of defendants who have completed the terms of their punishment. Community punishment



“A Look at Lower-Cost Solutions: Community Corrections and Drug Courts”

Opening General Session

10 a.m.,
Wednesday,
Aug. 20

Jeffery Williams
Deputy
Commissioner,
Alabama
Department of
Corrections

programs assist the state, counties and municipalities with overcrowding within incarceration (jails and prisons) facilities. By diverting non-violent felony offenders from prison, space is available for the incarceration of violent and repeat offenders. Among the services provided is supervised pre-trial release from jails when a defendant is unable to make bail. Participants are non-violent offenders that are monitored to ensure compliance with conditions of the release agreement. Offenders may be required to make restitution to victims, repay the community through community service work, undergo drug and alcohol testing and treatment, intensive supervision, or participate in work release programs, undergo house arrest with or without electronic monitoring, comply with day reporting requirements and probation monitoring with varying levels of

supervision. Rehabilitative programs that can be offered through community programs include literacy training, job training, job placement and GED preparation.

What exactly is a “drug court” and how does it fit under the community corrections umbrella?

A “drug court program” is defined as (1) an identified team of staff members (2) who coordinate the provision of services in a single setting, typically a single courthouse, and (3) who serve an identified population of drug-involved offenders from a particular community.

“A specially designed court calendar or docket, the purposes of which are to achieve a reduction in recidivism and



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From the Cover

substance abuse among nonviolent substance abusing offenders and to increase the offender's likelihood of successful habilitation through early, continuous, and intense judicially supervised treatment, mandatory periodic drug testing, community supervision, and use of appropriate sanctions and other habilitation services."

Are there advantages to community corrections beyond cost?

Certainly, most offenders who receive adequate supervision/treatment in the community are among the lowest to recidivate. Most of the felony offenders that are now incarcerated are coming back to the same community where they committed the crime that sent them to the penitentiary. To make a successful start, they need employment

and support services that can only be obtained locally. Many of these offenders are addicted to drugs or alcohol, lack an adequate education or job skills, and have problems that cannot be fully addressed in prison.

When they return to their communities through a community corrections program, they have the opportunity to gain real job skills and participate in treatment programs while under the watchful eye of CCP. This form of re-entry while still under court supervision is more successful than straight release where there is no supervision.

What do county commissioners need to understand about community corrections?

One of the primary goals of the Community Punishment and

Corrections Program is to promote accountability of offenders by requiring direct financial restitution to be made to victims of crime and that community service be made to governments and community agencies from the community. Not everyone that commits a crime can or should be incarcerated in a traditional prison. We must embrace alternatives to prison when there is no danger to public safety. For community corrections programs to be successful, they must have financial and in-kind support from their communities. Community Corrections Programs can also be used effectively to reduce recidivism. Finally, community corrections programs serve the local community's interest as well as the interest of the State of Alabama.

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Administrators to focus on money — coming in and going out

If it affects county government in any way, sooner or later it passes across the county administrator's desk, right?

With that in mind, county administrators and other members of the Association of County Administrators of Alabama will find diverse offerings at the ACCA Annual Convention later this summer.

For starters, ACCA's membership meeting is set for Tuesday, Aug. 19, at 1 p.m., and it will be followed immediately by a meeting of the two county insurance funds (see box for details).



The general session that kicks off activities on Wednesday, Aug. 20, is devoted to the convention's theme, Corrections at a Crossroads. The Council of State Governments, which Alabama leaders have brought in for guidance, is invited to speak.

From the state perspective, Alabama's Corrections Commissioner Kim Thomas and one of his top deputies have confirmed that they will be there. Even though administrators aren't law enforcement, you are thoroughly aware of the budgetary impact of the county jail. Counties are vulnerable if forthcoming changes shift the delicate balance between them and the state corrections system, so administrators will have a keen interest in those speakers and what you can do help.

There are two sessions that will be of particular interest Wednesday afternoon.

Shelby County Revenue Commissioner Don Armstrong will speak about "Revenue Protection on Property Taxes for Subsidized Housing," prompted by failed 2014 legislation that would have granted a huge tax break to developers of Section 42 housing. The bill is expected to return in 2015. A little later in the afternoon, ACCA Association Counsel Mary Pons will provide an "Open Meetings Law Refresher" to help you navigate the various situations that come up.

By the morning of Thursday, Aug. 21, the focus will return to funding issues with specific legislative changes to several county revenue streams. Commissioner Julie Magee from the Alabama Department of Revenue will be on hand to brief members on five different new laws affecting counties. You can get your questions answered about the new Tax Tribunal, suspension of taxes, data collection on business licenses, changes to the business personal property tax process and the Business Rapid Response to Declared Disasters Act.

Register online at www.alabamacounties.org.

ACCA insurance funds to meet Aug. 19

All counties that are members of ACCA's Liability Self-Insurance Fund Inc. or Workers' Compensation Self-Insurers' Fund will want to be represented at the insurance funds' meeting at 2 p.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 19.

In the liability fund, nine counties will receive checks of \$1,000 or more in recognition of the lowest three-year loss ratios in three size categories. Photos will be taken of award winning counties, and news releases will be sent to local news media.

In addition, each entity that is a member in one or both funds will receive important financial information for the coming year. Envelopes for each fund member will contain premium contribution amounts for the upcoming year and dividends per fund. This year, members of the liability fund will also receive information on their longevity bonus.



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From the Cover

AAEM plans ahead in election year

In an environment where Alabama has already seen two major outbreaks of severe weather in 2014, it couldn't be more important for emergency managers to be prepared for election year changes.

Help with those preparations is sure to be a highlight of ACCA's 86th Annual Convention for members of the Alabama Association of Emergency Managers.

The convention runs Aug. 19-21 this year at the Perdido Beach Resort in Orange Beach, and emergency managers will want to arrive in time for the AAEM membership meeting at 4 p.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 19.

The next day will be filled with a variety of sessions for everyone in county

government, and then Thursday, Aug. 21, the agenda will turn back to specialized sessions for each of ACCA's affiliate groups.

AAEM members will convene in a series of breakout sessions on Thursday morning from 8:30 to 11:45.

That is when AAEM

President Phyllis Little, who is EMA director in Cullman County, will help emergency managers focus on a different kind of preparedness.

There are 137 county commission slots on the ballot in the 2014 elections,

which are sure to bring new faces to courthouses around the state.

Thirteen commissioners from 11 different counties are not seeking re-election, and there will likely be some incumbents who don't succeed at the polls.

What does that mean for EMA? It means that there will be new commissioners who need to learn the basics of emergency management and the county's role in disasters of all types.

Little has developed a model notebook for new commissioners to help them get up-to-speed on this important county responsibility, and she will share how other counties can put together their own top-notch resource for their elected officials.



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From the Cover

Looking at future of 9-1-1 with AAND

Recent years have seen big changes for 9-1-1 districts in Alabama, and the ACCA's upcoming Annual Convention will provide opportunities to catch up on the latest happenings and look ahead.

The Alabama Association of 9-1-1 Districts has won notice beyond the state's borders for the new funding mechanism that the Alabama Legislature passed in 2012.

The old model was unsustainable, so Alabama's 9-1-1 community locked in a new funding model built on a level, statewide fee for any and all devices that can access 9-1-1.

So, now is the time for an organization with an established track record of planning to look to the future once again.

ACCA Executive Director Sonny Brasfield will be focused on that when he addresses the AAND breakout session on Thursday, Aug. 21. His topic is "The Future of 9-1-1," and Brasfield said efficiency is the next frontier.

"In the current political climate, there is tremendous support for 'downsizing' and 'streamlining' government operations," he said. "No one would question the importance of 9-1-1, but there is an opportunity for AAND and local 9-1-1 boards to focus their energies on maximizing efficiency wherever and whenever possible."

The day is slated to start with a legislative update from John Hamm and Sallie Gowan from ACCA's legislative team.

Another highlight of will be the awards ceremony, where the County Government Education Institute will award the certificate in emergency communication to those who have completed requirements in the last year.

Members will want to be sure they arrive at the convention in time for AAND's business meeting on Tuesday, Aug. 19, at 3 p.m. A top item on the agenda will be the election of officers for the 2014-2015 year.



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New laws in 2014 mean lots to learn for CROAA

Collecting county revenue is serious business, and that's especially evident when you consider the schedule for members of the County Revenue Officers Association of Alabama at ACCA's 86th Annual Convention in August.

Revenue officers will start the three-day event with four hours of professional development on Tuesday, Aug. 19, and a business meeting for the organization. New officers and board members will be elected, and CROAA also presents awards to recognize excellence in their profession.

The sessions custom-tailored for CROAA resume during the morning breakouts on Thursday, Aug. 21. Commissioner Julie Magee from the Alabama Department of Revenue will be on hand to brief members on five different new laws that affect their work. You can get your questions answered about the Tax Tribunal, suspension of taxes, data collection on business licenses, changes to the business personal property tax process and the Business Rapid Response to Declared Disasters Act.

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From the Cover

Learning, networking for engineers at ACCA Convention

County engineers will find plenty to appeal to them during ACCA's 86th Annual Convention, from professional learning to networking to the business of their professional organization.

The Association of County Engineers of Alabama, an affiliate of the Association of County Engineers of Alabama, has meetings of both its board and membership on Tuesday, Aug. 19.

One of the big items on the agenda during the membership meeting will be the election of a new slate of officers as well as board representatives from nine divisions throughout the state.

That same day will be the Exhibit Showcase, from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. The exhibit hall is always packed with vendors vying to do business with county road and bridge departments, so county engineers will want to be sure to make the rounds there.

As an extra enticement, lunch is served in the exhibit hall at noon, and the opening reception is set there as well beginning at 5 p.m.

Thursday morning is reserved for breakout sessions tailored to particular interests within county government, and the line-up for county engineers is substantial.

Speakers are set to cover implementation of recent legislation, the latest on ATRIP, the tough new requirements to qualify for Storage Tank Trust Fund reimbursements, funding for railroad safety devices, revisions to road vacation procedures and subdivision regulations to just name a few hot topics which will be addressed.



Sessions of Special Interest to County Engineers 86th Annual ACCA Convention

Tuesday, Aug. 19, 2014

ACEA Board Meeting – 9 a.m.

ACEA Membership Meeting – 10 a.m.

Thursday, Aug. 21, 2014

Legislative Update on Call Before You Dig, Bid Notices and Prompt Pay with Mary Pons – 8:30 a.m.

Storage Tank Trust Fund Reimbursement Guidelines with ADEM – 9 a.m.

Logging Notice Update – 9:30 a.m.

ALDOT Update with Ed Austin – 10:15 a.m.

Revisions to Road Vacation Procedures and Subdivision Regulations with Mary Pons – 10:45

Getting Funding for Railroad Crossing Safety Devices – 11:15 a.m.

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From the Cover

Citizens Academy yields ambassadors for county government

The comment came from a resident of Henry County, but it could have come from anywhere in the state.

“I never really understood what the county commission really does,” said Faye Woods, shortly after the Henry County Commission recognized her and the other citizens who volunteered for an initiative to familiarize citizens with their county government. “I had no idea that the county was involved in so much; I have really been struck by the vastness of what goes on.”

Exposing citizens to the “real” story of county government was the driving force behind establishing a Citizens Academy at several locations around the state. The idea started in Mobile County but after representatives of that commission presented the positive results at an ACCA-sponsored training event, other counties – including Clay, Henry and Russell – have implemented similar programs.

86th Annual ACCA Convention

1:30 p.m., Wednesday, Aug. 20, 2014

“Citizens Academy Success Stories”

Probate Judge and Chairman David Money, Henry County
Commissioner Chance Corbett, Russell County

Register at www.alabamacounties.org

And the Association is highlighting the positive outcomes from a Citizens Academy during the Annual Convention in August. At that time, county officials will be given the details necessary to replicate the program.

See Page 32



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From the Cover

Every county should do this. —Faye Woods, Henry County

From Page 30

The Henry County Commission recognized the first “graduating” class of its Citizens Academy during a commission meeting on April 8, and state Rep. Dexter Grimsley and Sheriff William Maddox were also on hand to congratulate participants. Probate Judge and Commission Chair David Money recognized each one individually and praised the group as “extremely engaged, loyal and inquisitive.”

The program in Henry County involved five sessions during regular business hours designed to give an overview of the various programs and departments of county government. The academy began in December with a session on the courthouse and the judicial system, and other meetings explored county revenue, roads and transportation, law enforcement and emergency response.

Byron Starling, a retiree sometimes described as Henry County’s best fisherman, encouraged others to participate. “I’ve got something I’d like to say,” he declared, standing as his name was called by Judge Money. “After going through this, I learned some things about this county that I didn’t know. And I’ve lived here all my life. Henry County is in good hands.”

And that sense of community pride – that makes citizens into ambassadors for their home county – was one of the main goals, said Association Executive Director Sonny Brasfield.

“This is, in some ways, a conclusion of the program,” Brasfield told the participants. “But this commission is looking for all 12 of you to go out into the community and to share the information you learned. When people ask questions or make statements about county government, you should

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From the Cover



Participants in Henry County's first-ever Citizens Academy packed the first two benches at a recent commission meeting where they were recognized for completing the program, designed to help them gain a better understanding of all that county government does in their communities.

be armed with the correct information about the dedicated people who work for you every day.”

Henry County has scheduled a second Citizens Academy to begin in June.

“We are going shift to an evening time frame to include those who might not have been able to participate during regular business hours,” Money said. “We hope to have more than 12 this time.”

The commission will have little trouble getting volunteers for summer school, if Woods has anything to do with it.

“Every county should do this,” she concluded. “We had such great participation from everyone involved. Each office invested time in preparing and then explaining their role and duties to us. I was especially impressed with the complexity of the activities and the courtesy of the employees and how well they work together.”

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From the Courthouse to the State House Former county commissioners in the Alabama Legislature

These days when the Alabama House of Representatives goes into session, there are three more experts in county government on the floor.

There have been several special elections across the state to fill mid-term vacancies, and three of these new legislators have county commission experience on their resumes.

“While we never want to see a strong and effective leader leave their county commission, everyone in county government benefits when legislators have a deep understanding of our issues,” said Sonny Brasfield, executive director of the Association of County Commissions of Alabama. “And there’s no better way to understand county government than that have lived it and breathed it and wrestled with the challenges faced in all 67 counties.”

ACCA informally refers to these commissioners-turned-legislators as the “County Caucus,” and these latest additions bring the caucus up to 11 members.

The newest member is Rep. Dimitri Polizos, a restaurant owner who spent nine years on the Montgomery County Commission. He now represents House District 74, which includes parts of Montgomery County, and serves on the House County and Municipal Government Committee. His interest in the Legislature was sparked after a difficult meeting with a member of the Montgomery delegation where a county issue went unresolved.

“It intrigues me about people that pass laws and I wanted to get up here,” he said. His new colleagues have already

benefitted from his hospitality when he brought in pizza from his restaurant, Mr. Gus’ Ristorante. Preparation is important to him too. Most legislators are only in the State House Tuesday-Thursday, but he often drops by on Mondays to get ready for the busy days ahead.

The fast pace of the session has been something of a

surprise. “If you’re not paying attention, you miss something,” Polizos said, laughing. “We did things more orderly at the county. This is chaotic.”

Of course 2014 is an election year, and Polizos is unopposed in the Republican primary but has an opponent in November.

Just down the hall on the State House’s 5th floor is the office of Rep. Randall Shedd, another member of the House County and Municipal Government Committee.

Shedd was elected to represent part of Blount, Cullman and Morgan counties from District 11. Under new district lines for the 2014 elections, District 11 will also include part of Marshall County. No one has qualified to run against him this year.

Local government has been in his blood for some time. When he was elected chairman of the Cullman County Commission in 1977, he was the youngest chairman ever in Alabama and the entire United States, according to the National Association of Counties.

He served two terms as chairman, and he worked actively in ACCA. He was ACCA president in 1984, and his official portrait still hangs in the ACCA office. He later served six years as mayor of his hometown of Fairview, while working in banking and leading the Cullman County Commission on Aging.

County Caucus

Former county commissioners in the 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. Dimitri Polizos,
Montgomery

Rep. Randall Shedd, Cullman

Rep. David Standridge, Blount

Rep. Lesley Vance, Russell.

Rep. Randy Wood, Calhoun

News You Can Use



Rep. Dimitri Pilizos was sworn into office on the opening day of the 2014 Regular Session

Serving in Montgomery has been on his mind nearly his entire life. “I’ve been wanting to do this since I was 12 years old,” he said. “Now I can mark it off my bucket list.” His personality is a bit on the quiet side, but his sense of humor is ever-present. He decorated his Montgomery office with a framed picture of a cowboy that he found on a trip out west.

Underneath the man’s image, there’s an inscription that says “There were a heckuva lot of things they didn’t tell me when I hired on with this outfit.” The representative thought that was an appropriate sentiment for the Legislature too.

Now that he’s on this side of things, Shedd said it is extra important for commissioners to have good, professional relationships with their legislators. “I think that’s the biggest recommendation,” he said.

This year marks Shedd’s first full session in the Legislature, and there’s another thing he can scratch off his bucket list. In February he passed his first bill, an ACCA-backed measure to allow the Alabama Emergency Management Agency to donate equipment and supplies directly to county emergency management agencies.

“I think the ACCA has gotten stronger,” he said. “It is a help to us, especially a new legislator like me, to have the ACCA helping me.” One of Shedd’s neighboring House districts is represented by a person with county ties. Rep. David Standridge began his political career on the Blount County



Rep. David Standridge, left, and Rep. Randall Shedd, right, joined the Alabama Legislature in 2013. Photos: Dionne Whetstone, Alabama House of Representatives

Board of Education in 2000, and, in 2006, he won a term as the county’s probate judge and commission chairman.

Standridge, who spent more than 20 years working in law enforcement, was elected in December 2012 to represent portions of Blount and Jefferson counties from District 34. Under new district lines for the 2014

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It is extra important for commissioners to have good, professional relationships with their legislators. —Rep. Randall Shedd

From Page 35

elections, District 34 will lose Jefferson County and gain a portion of Marshall County. No one has qualified to run against him. Despite his familiarity with the legislative process, Standridge said he has a new appreciation for the difficulty of passing anything – even when it's noncontroversial.

"You really have to build allies and get people to help you get things through committee," he said.

With his expertise in election law, Standridge sponsored a 2014 ACCA Bill to require independent candidates to qualify to run for office on the same schedule as major party candidates.

The representative said he has enjoyed leaning on his varied background – going right back to his formative years on a farm – to inform his understanding of State House issues.

"A lot of things that come through the Legislature, I have some experience with," he said.

"What's good about the Legislature, there are people who have experience in fields I do not. I can go to them, and that's one thing I've found that is very helpful."

He said his friendships through years in ACCA have also been helpful, and he enjoys seeing those contacts when they come through Montgomery. In 2013, he passed a statewide bill to protect many public employees from having their personal information disclosed by the Alabama Ethics Commission.

The commission posts information from required financial filings online.

For his work, he was honored by Alabama members of the Police

Benevolent Association. He has continued that effort this year, with legislation to clarify that information should be redacted from filings submitted before the 2013 law became

effective. That bill, which drew keen interest from the Alabama Association of Emergency Managers, passed the Legislature and Gov. Robert Bentley signed the bill into law on Feb. 25.

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