

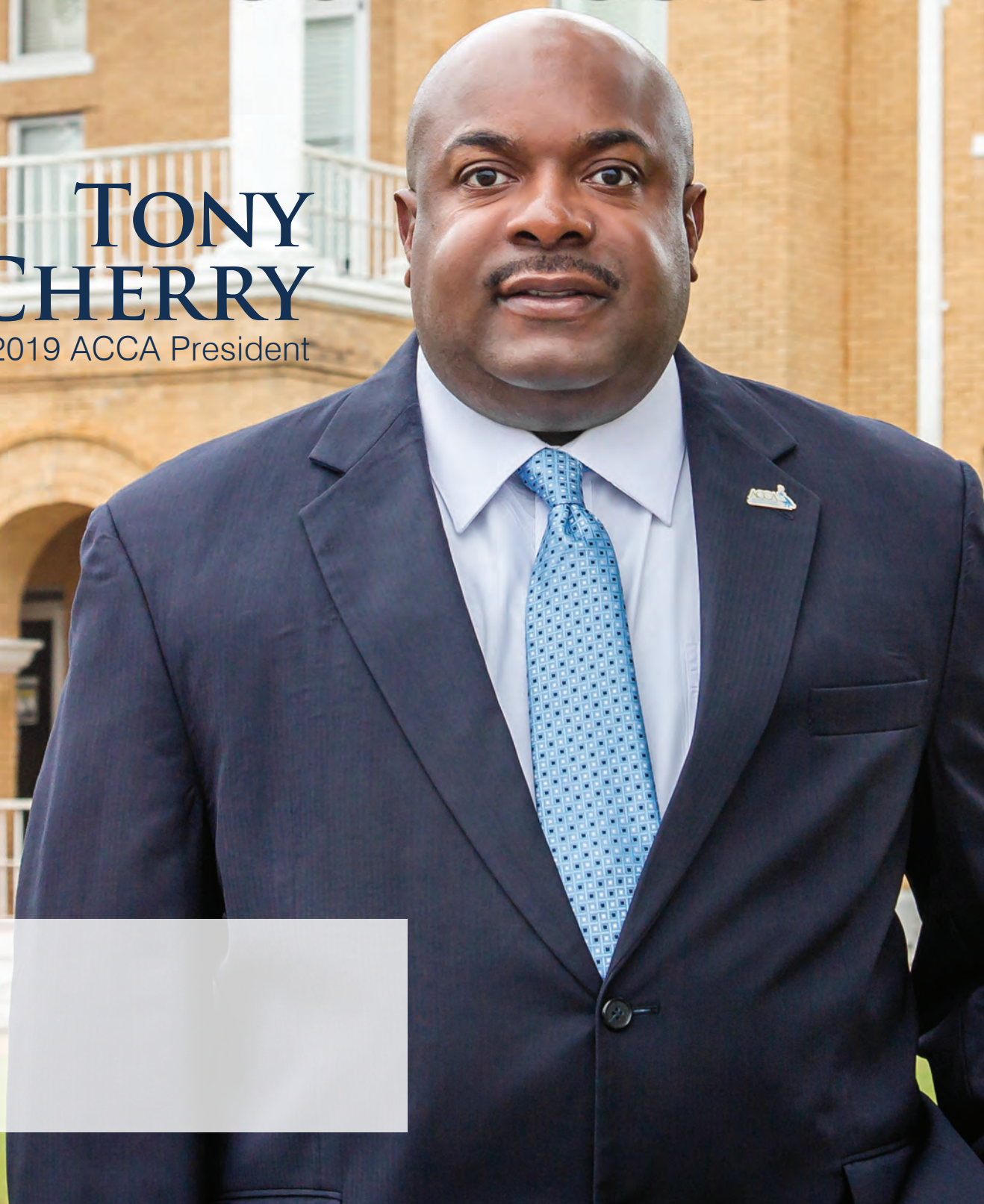
PUBLISHED BY THE ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY COMMISSIONS OF ALABAMA

# COUNTY COMMISSION

Volume 62, Number 4  
October 2018

**TONY  
CHERRY**

2018-2019 ACCA President



# Budget Shortfall?



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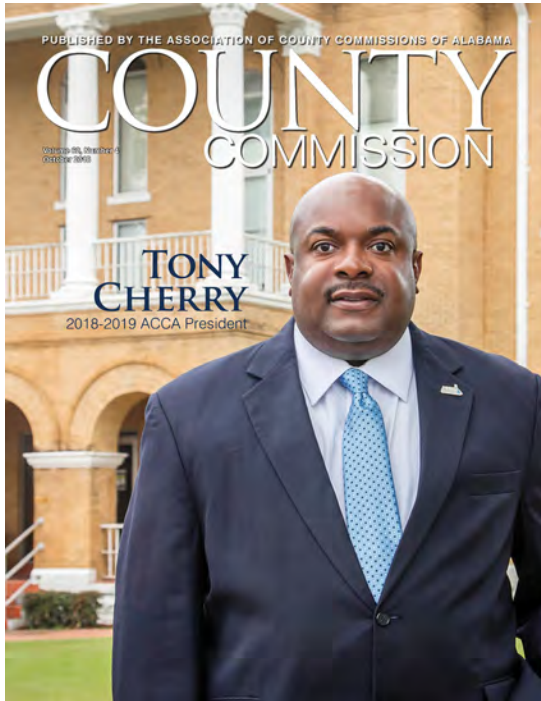
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VOLUME 62, NUMBER 4



*Our success will not be complete without contributions from all of us, said 2018-2019 ACCA President Tony Cherry. (Photo: Andrea Graham Photography)*

## Statement of Ownership, Management & Circulation As of September 2018 - County Commission Published 5 times a year

Association of County Commissions of Alabama  
PO Box 5040, Montgomery AL 36103

Publisher	Sonny Brasfield
Editor	Sallie Owen Gowan
Managing Editor	Abby Fitzpatrick

### Circulation - Average of preceding 12 months

Number of copies ordered	1,550
Paid circulation (mail)	1,477
Free Distribution	0
Total Distribution	1,477
Office Use	73
Grand Total	1,550

COUNTY COMMISSION is published five times a year by the Association of County Commissions of Alabama, Inc.; P.O. Box 5040; Montgomery, AL 36103. Subscription rates are \$20 per year, which is included in the dues of members. Additional copies, when available, are \$2 each to non-members. Periodicals postage paid at Montgomery, Alabama. Postmaster: Send address changes to COUNTY COMMISSION; P.O. Box 5040; Montgomery, AL 36103. USPS 985-380

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# President's PERSPECTIVE



Hon. Tony Cherry  
President

*Tony L. Cherry*

**Find your place in  
ACCA this year**

**Success will not be  
complete without  
contributions  
from all of us**

*Editor's Note:  
This is the prepared  
text of Tony Cherry's  
inaugural address.*

**A**s we come to the conclusion of our 90th Annual Convention — a time for reflection and for evaluation — I am humbled to be one of only 90 county commissioners who, in almost a full century, have been entrusted with the responsibility of leading this enormously-important organization.

I do not embark on this journey without having fully dedicated myself to ensuring that I will fulfill your expectations but, more importantly, that I will contribute to the improvement of this Association and our great state. It is an honor that I will cherish for the rest of my life. This ain't too bad for a guy from Choctaw County!

Despite all the negative headlines, the social media critics and those who second-guess every decision that we make — all of us **are** here in this room tonight because we have a passion in our hearts for public service. Whether we are elected officials, county employees who come to work every day ready to help people who are many times ungrateful — or if we are the spouse who stands shoulder-to-shoulder and supports us along the way. No matter what role we play, our responsibility is to serve those around us and to seek out ways to make life a little bit better each and every day.

I believe there is no better place to impact the lives of our neighbors than at the county commission. I truly believe that.

Each of us has been given the opportunity to serve on the front lines. We see our constituents every day; we know their problems,

and we are given the awesome opportunity to pick up the mantle and actually **do something** rather than sit on the sidelines. I am going to ask you to join me and “get in the game,” to borrow a phrase from our Coach, Steve McKinnon, because there is plenty of work to go around. Each of you has a spot on the team, and we need everyone.

Before I give you my thoughts on the year ahead, I want to recognize four people who have set a remarkable legacy for all of us to follow. Four people who have, in their own individual ways, been the cornerstones of our Association. And tonight, before we look ahead, it is essential that we look at those who have laid the foundation upon which our future successes will be constructed.

In 1995, our Association stood at a critical crossroads. There were some who wanted to take us in a different direction. They wanted the Association to veer from its mission to speak with only one voice — and for the common good of all counties. And on that night — in this very room — the Association took a bold step in electing the first probate judge president in more than 25 years. My friend and mentor Hardy McCollum stood here, poured out his heart for the future of this organization and set us on the unified course that we follow today. He called on us to remember that we are “Family” and that families disagree, and families sometimes go in different directions, but — in the end — families always come home.

He was president a quarter of a century ago. But I do not believe he has been absent at a single convention since then. He has

anchored our Board of Directors. He has guided us through 25 years of growth and successes. And he will be missed as he steps into retirement in January.

For almost two years, our organization led the statewide charge to provide for the future of 9-1-1 programs in our state. We were opposed from almost every angle — but as we always do — we eventually prevailed. In 2012, under the leadership of my friend Tim Choate, we enacted a statewide solution for 9-1-1 funding that has directly impacted the lives of all our citizens. And since then, Tim's calm, thoughtful and insightful manner has been a steadying hand as this Association has embarked on even more challenging issues. You have been faithful, and we will miss you — more than you can imagine.

If you were in this room the following year — when Debbie

***Everyone must contribute,  
and no one should  
expect their neighbor to  
carry their load.***

Wood became president — and if you watched her revitalize this Association with a vision that commissioners, sheriffs, tax officials and probate judges ought to work together, then you know that every one of us has a responsibility to carry her legacy forward. And I will proudly do so beginning tonight.

Like Judge McCollum, Debbie also assumed the role of president at a challenging time. She urged us all to be fighters just like her. And she will forever be known to all of us as The Champ. She's decided to go "fight" for us in the Alabama House

of Representatives, where she will show them all what it means to be a public servant.

It is not often that it comes time to say "goodbye" to a past president who was just up here on this podium earlier in the convention. But our friend Bill Stricklend has decided to move on to a new arena of public service. And our challenge now is to finish the work he started.

He assumed the role of president two years ago tonight. At that moment, he asked us all to take a pledge with him that 2017 would be the year that we finally convinced the Legislature to do something about our roads and bridges. Very few of you have any idea the personal sacrifice and political risks that must be taken when you lead **the** organization that is out front pushing a gas tax in Alabama. But Bill does.



## ACCA SALUTES COMMISSIONERS HONORED IN 2018 FOR THEIR LONG AND FAITHFUL SERVICE TO COUNTY GOVERNMENT

32 YEARS

Hon. Mose Jones Jr.  
LAWRENCE COUNTY

24 YEARS

Hon. Larry White  
ESCAMBIA COUNTY

Hon. John Andrew Harris  
LEE COUNTY

20 YEARS

Hon. Unzell Kelley  
COOSA COUNTY

Hon. Ricky Harcrow  
DEKALB COUNTY

Hon. Michael Davis  
MARION COUNTY

Hon. Jeff Clark  
MORGAN COUNTY

Hon. Thomas "T.C." Coley  
TALLAPOOSA COUNTY

16 YEARS

Hon. Ricky Hubbard  
BIBB COUNTY

Hon. Debbie Wood  
CHAMBERS COUNTY

Hon. Ricky McElwain  
CRENSHAW COUNTY

Hon. Dewitt Jackson  
DEKALB COUNTY

Hon. Bradley Cross  
LAWRENCE COUNTY

Hon. John Crawford Jr.  
MARENGO COUNTY

Hon. Kenny Jackson  
MARION COUNTY

His commitment to this organization, and to our mission, only grew stronger the more this organization was criticized for being so active in our support. He pulled together the leadership of other organizations, used his marvelous interpersonal skills and helped us forge a legislative proposal that **should have** been passed two years ago. Bill, I want you to hear me promise you that as our new president, I will do everything humanly possible to finish the mission that has been set before me. And when we are successful, we will have you back here to celebrate with us.

At this time, we would like to provide each of you with a little remembrance of this convention and of this Association's origins in 1929. We have asked one of your Past President colleagues to present you with an official map of the State of Alabama from 1929 — the year this Association was organized.

We hope each of you will find a place to hang this map so that you will remember all of us, how grateful we are for your leadership and — most importantly — the friendships we have all built as we have created One strong voice for our 67 counties. Hardy, Tim, Debbie and Bill — Thank you, again.

Our Association will continue to move forward; continue to provide statewide leadership on the important policy issues of the day; and we will continue to give each of you the tools you need to succeed. But we can only do that if the people in this room will resolve to pick up the slack that is being created by the loss of these four past presidents — and at least 50 more commissioners who will not be returning when we gather here again next year.

The clock continues to tick, and it will be time to welcome a new group



During the Association's Business Session, 2017-2018 President Steve McKinnon, right, officially passed the ACCA gavel to 2018-2019 President Tony Cherry.

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of commissioners in November. Those of you who will continue to serve actually now must take on the responsibility to find your place — no, to actually **take** your place — as part of the new leadership.

This coming year presents an outstanding opportunity for us to finally do something about our crumbling road and bridge system. We will welcome in a new Legislature — one that we believe is better poised to address our infrastructure needs. But that is only going to happen if this organization assumes the reins of this effort and demands that we, **finally**, address this problem in a fair and positive way.

You will be asked to come to Montgomery; to speak out in your community; to use your influence; and to ensure that we do not fail. I am fully committed. And if you are not fully committed right now, then I challenge you to get your heart right. Cause it is going to take every one of us. Every one. And we simply cannot fail.

There are so many other issues that also must be addressed in the coming months.

The U.S. Supreme Court has cleared the way for states to initiate programs to collect revenue from electronic retail sales delivered into Alabama. Because of this Association, and the insight of its staff, we have been a national leader on this subject since 2014. Just this past session, many of you played key roles in securing the passage of an amendment to our SSUT law. We almost certainly will face the need to make further changes this session as we look boldly toward protecting the future of our communities.

Those who wish to push responsibilities down to county government are almost certain to again try to fund the growing need



During the President's Banquet, Tony Cherry exhorted county leaders to work energetically for the betterment of all 67 counties.

for juvenile justice reform on the backs of the county commissions. With Steve's leadership we pushed back on this issue last session and won a major victory — but our opponents will be back. The question is whether you will take your place and help us be ready.

The need for mental health reform, changes to the process for funding the feeding of jail inmates and the reform of the governance of our state Retirement System by providing a stronger voice for local government are other issues that we will tackle together in the coming months.

There are so many other public policy questions that must be

answered. But the hour is late, and I know that you are probably ready for me to sit down. But I can't let this Convention end without asking for your support of the changes that are just around the corner for this Association.

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Behind the vision of our staff and the insurance trustees, we are finally taking the reins of our own future by assuming the responsibility for managing both our insurance funds. Few of you realize the hard work that has already gone into this transition by our outstanding staff. But I want you to join me in expressing our full support for the efforts of our staff and providing them our commitment to join them in moving our programs forward in the next 12 months.

There will be some bumps in the road. But I am so very impressed with the leadership of our staff and am confident that all our citizens will benefit when this transition is complete.

When we gather in Montgomery in December, our Association office will have moved — just a few yards — to a new location on the 7th floor of 2 North Jackson Street. The Association's Board of Directors is so very proud of this relocation and the new level of service you will receive from the resources that will be available there. The new home of "67 Counties, **One** Voice" is just another step in moving this Association forward and keeping with the vision of those who started this organization 90 years ago.

I can't wait for the day when our insurance services and the full Association are all located there on North Jackson Street. This will usher in a new era in our Association's remarkable history. Sonny, on behalf of our membership, I want to again thank you for the leadership you are providing and for the outstanding work of your staff.

Now, I want to challenge everyone in this room to find their place to serve this outstanding organization. There is certainly enough unfinished work to go

around. If we are to have complete success, it will take all of us.

Everyone must contribute, and no one should expect their neighbor to carry their load. I have found my place to serve. And, in some ways, I was once a bit unsure of how I would fit into this role. But not anymore. After this week, I am confident that I am right where I'm supposed to be. This is the year for me to be president. And this is the year for you to find **your** place.

Clearly, you know that everyone in this room cannot be president of this organization, or serve on the Board of Directors, or be on the Legislative Committee, or be on one of the insurance boards, or be appointed to a study committee, or be on the board of one of the affiliate groups. But there are other places you can serve. Believe me. There is a place for you.

The Association's strength should be its ability to focus experts and dedicated professionals on every problem that faces our state. Are you as involved as you should be? Have you made a sacrifice to be a part of this Association's efforts on behalf of your county?

Do you demand that your staff be fully engaged? Do you demand that they find their place of leadership? Or do

you sit and rely on your neighbors to carry **your** load?

Ninety years ago, this organization was set in motion by commissioners who had a vision that county government should lead this state — a vision that I share even today. They believed that things could be better. And they were right. We are better. But we have more to do.

The challenges before us cannot be achieved if there are empty seats at the table. If you are absent — and your seat is empty — then we are weaker. And not only is your county weaker, but because your seat is empty, **my** county — and my constituents — are weaker, as well.

The time for waiting, the time for leaning on others, is over. After 90 years, don't you think it's time you joined in the fight? I do.

Please come join me.

Let's enjoy the rest of this evening. Then let's get to work. ■

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**Sonny Brasfield**  
*Executive Director*

*Sonny Brasfield*

## Beginning a new era for the Association

**New 'home base'  
in Montgomery  
better equipped to  
serve members**

It was the spring of 1977, and dreams of Major League Baseball still bounced around in the head of a Tuscaloosa teenager. College applications were being filled out, and high school graduation was only a few weeks away.

Not surprisingly, achieving the graduation and application goals turned out to be much more realistic than that baseball thing.

Anyway, at the same time in Montgomery, the Association of County Commissions of Alabama was moving into its brand new building at 100 North Jackson Street. The ground-breaking photographs show county officials — most of whom have long-since left us — beaming with pride that Alabama's 67 county governments would, finally, have their own physical presence in the state's capital city.

Just two blocks from the Capitol, the opening of the building would be a major step forward for county government in Alabama. And for the next 40 years, thousands of county officials and employees, state officials and others involved in government in Alabama would come in and out the door at 100 North Jackson.

Over the years, many of Alabama's major policy issues have been solved and resolved inside the Association's headquarters. Decisions that have provided counties with revenue from the Alabama Trust Fund, created a constitutional amendment barring unfunded mandates, and put in motion the two largest road and bridge programs in Alabama's history all were born inside that building.

It has been a gathering spot in Montgomery for county officials. It

has watched over the growth of the Association's services. And it has been a home for county officials and employees who know that doing their jobs effectively means having a strong presence in Montgomery.

Honestly, if the walls could talk, they could recount the history of Alabama over the past 40 years.

In just a few weeks, as 2018 turns into 2019, the building at 100 North Jackson will begin a new phase of service. On January 1, it will become the home of the claims staff that will handle the hundreds of claims filed every year through our three insurance programs. The walls will still hear stories about counties and the problems they face, but the perspective of those doing the talking will be just a little bit different.

At the same time, the Association's staff will move into a new home just across the parking lot at 2 North Jackson Street. Today, work is well underway on repurposing level 7 of the Business Center of Alabama so that counties can expand and renew their perspective — ushering in a new era for the Association, without losing what has been so good about the headquarters that have served us so well for 40 years.

Commissioners and county officials will still find the new office to be a great "home base" in Montgomery. The new facilities have been designed to provide the members with an upgraded place to gather, updated resources for the staff and an even larger conference room and meeting facility that can house about 50 or more. The Association staff will also have more functional space that will raise the

organization's presence and role in Alabama.

On the outside, the building will bear the Association's brand and will clearly be the home of county government in our state. We believe the new facilities will enhance our services to counties and their officials and employees.

By the time you arrive in Montgomery for this year's Legislative Conference, the staff should be making the short move to 2 North Jackson Street, and work to repurpose the current headquarters building will start shortly thereafter. By the start of 2019, the Association staff will be in its new home and all insurance functions will be housed right alongside in two familiar buildings just across the parking lot.

We'll provide you more information in the coming weeks but hope you will be able to stop by and see the Association's new headquarters building while in Montgomery for the conference.

I realize it's not 1977 and most of those 40-year-old dreams are no longer relevant. But in 2019 and beyond, county government remains the most important provider of services to the citizens at the local level, and this Association still has new many new goals to explore and a new place to put those plans into motion. ■



## *Congratulations TO Commissioners* COMPLETING EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN 2018

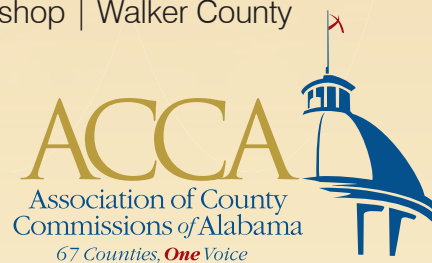
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Hon. Tommy Bowers | St. Clair County

### LEVEL I

Hon. Mack Mosley | Choctaw County  
Hon. David Hester | Franklin County  
Hon. Ward Williams | Shelby County  
Hon. Jerry Bishop | Walker County



# Insuring the Future of County Government



The Association's Self-Funded Insurance Pools have been an important part of county government past and present, and the future looks even brighter for counties after recent announcements.

At ACCA's 90th Convention & Celebration in August, one piece of big news was the more than \$2 million being returned to insurance participants this year alone. But even that substantial sum was overshadowed by the giant steps forward on self-administration, an internal move expected to enhance insurance services and, ultimately, save county dollars.

Historically, the funds have outsourced the nuts and bolts of daily insurance operations to an insurance group with several clients of focus, but these duties will move "in house" and into the hands of professionals working exclusively for counties effective New Year's Day.

## On the move

For starters, the ACCA headquarters is relocating, but it is not going far. By the end of the year, the executive director and staff will work from the 7th floor of 2 North Jackson Street, the building next door to the Association's current location. This move was necessary to make space for expanded insurance operations.

Soon, all aspects of the Association and county government insurance will be conveniently located on North Jackson Street, with insurance services to be housed in the current ACCA offices at 100 & 104 North Jackson Street.

"We believe having the full Association staff together in downtown Montgomery will be very much a positive," said ACCA Executive Director Sonny Brasfield.

## About CRS Inc.

Earlier this year, the Board members of the county insurance pools elected to establish a new nonprofit organization, County Risk Services Inc. (CRS), to carry out administrative functions. CRS is governed by a five-member board appointed by the insurance pools, and the board is chaired by Ricky Harcrow, chairman of the DeKalb County Commission and an ACCA past president. Daily operations will be overseen by Henry van Arcken, ACCA's director of insurance services.

County leaders will find more familiar faces on the CRS team. A total of 13 employees of Meadowbrook Insurance Group, which has most recently handled county insurance operations, will make the transition, including:

- Mark Macon, liability/property director;
- Connie Wilson, workers' compensation claims director;
- Eddie Ousley, safety director.

Specifically, CRS will provide enhanced services in

the following areas: claims administration, underwriting, policy administration, member participation, accounting, member services and safety programs.

"The self-funded insurance programs are run by counties, and they have always sought to provide custom-tailored coverage," Harcrow said. "CRS will have no other clients, so every professional on the team will be 100 percent focused on the needs of counties."

## Great expectations

Counties can look forward to numerous benefits as self-administration is fully implemented, benefits that should lead to increased county savings. A member portal is projected to be operational in 2019, providing digital reporting and real-time review of claims. Safety efforts will be more customizable, and data-driven decisions should improve service.

## The time is now

Alabama counties formed their first self-insurance pool more than 40 years ago out of necessity.

In 1976, the driving force was dramatic price increases in the commercial market for workers' compensation policies.

Today, the changing landscape of the commercial insurance market was again a factor in the switch to self-administration, but the remarkable growth of county programs is the most significant contributor.

More than 60 of the 67 counties — and dozens of county-related entities — participate in one or more insurance program(s). Workers' compensation has been available for the longest, followed by liability coverage and, more recently, property coverage.

Participation is at an all-time high, and enhancing safety will be a continued emphasis.

"If you want a real-world instance of counties coming together to solve a collective problem, you would be hard-pressed to find a better example than the self-funded insurance programs," Brasfield said. "They have been a mainstay for decades, and we are well on our way to providing even better services for decades to come." ■



ACCA'S 90<sup>TH</sup> CONVENTION & CELEBRATION  
WAS ONE FOR THE RECORD BOOKS AS  
COUNTY LEADERS CONSIDERED  
"WHERE WE'VE BEEN, WHERE WE ARE  
AND WHERE WE'RE GOING."

This issue of *County Commission Magazine* will give extra attention to the future of county government and this Association.

Many presentations and handouts are available online:  
[www.alabamacounties.org/convention2018](http://www.alabamacounties.org/convention2018)

# A Strong County Presence in the Capital City



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*104 North Jackson Street*  
County Risk Services Inc. –  
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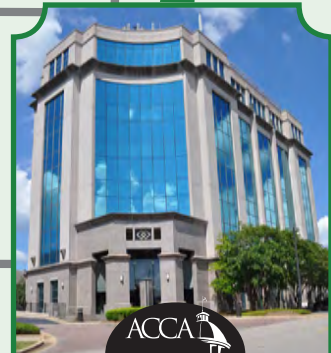
Jackson St.



*Alabama State Capitol*  
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*Alabama  
Statehouse*



*2 North Jackson Street*  
Association Staff, Suite 700



# Focusing on Roads and Bridges in 2019

County leaders are crystal clear about what is on the top of 2019's "To-Do" List: secure additional revenue for local transportation infrastructure.

"This coming year presents an outstanding opportunity for us to finally do something about our crumbling road and bridge system," said 2018-2019 Association President Tony Cherry in his inaugural address. "We will welcome in a new Legislature — one that we believe is better poised to address our infrastructure needs. But that is only going to happen if this organization assumes the reins of this effort."

County leaders will have up-

to-date data and analysis at their fingertips thanks to the Road and Bridge Data Collection Survey, announced to commissioners and engineers at the ACCA Convention in August.

"With survey responses from each and every one of the 67 counties, we will be better able to convey the current state of our county road and bridge system," said ACCA Executive Director Sonny Brasfield. "Completing this survey is an essential step to obtaining our ultimate goal — having the Alabama Legislature increase funding for county infrastructure."

The survey is a sequel to

"A Silent Crisis," a publication from the Association of County Engineers of Alabama that used 2010 data — both statewide and county-by-county — to sound the alarm about inadequate funding for local roads and bridges.

At the time, simple analysis showed a shortfall of \$133 million a year to adequately maintain Alabama's county roads and bridges. The sequel, sometimes called "The Silence is Broken: Continuing the Conversation," will show how that shortfall has grown in the ensuing years.

During September, counties submitted the following information through the survey:

- Size of road and bridge network
- Major improvements (i.e., resurfacing or bridge replacement) since 2000
- Projects planned for the next five years with current funding
- Budget breakdown for the road and bridge department
- Bridges should be replaced every 50 years, but current funding supports replacement every 186 years.

### Building on a Foundation

The survey results and communications tools that will follow are not the beginning of the 2019 effort. A foundation of advocacy has already been set on this critical issue.

Transportation funding has received substantial legislative attention in recent years, influenced by the DRIVE Alabama advocacy campaign. Many legislators who served during the 2014-2018 quadrennium benefitted from personal tours of county roads in their districts. And Brasfield has noted that lessons learned from the unsuccessful 2017 road funding proposal will be instructive.

A joint project of ACCA and ACEA, the survey is headed up by a pair of county staff leaders: Josh Harvill, Chambers County engineer, and Richie Beyer, Elmore County's chief engineer and operations officer.

Roads and bridges have an expected life cycle, much like the tires on a car or the roof on a house, but current funding does not keep pace with the need.

- Roads should be resurfaced every 15 years, but current funding allows resurfacing every 56 years.

All 140 members of the Alabama Legislature are up for election this year, and county leaders have been asking candidates their position on new road funding since qualifying opened.

In keeping with tradition, Cherry took the opportunity during his inaugural address to issue a challenge to county leaders about the work ahead. "If you are not fully committed right now, then I challenge you to get your heart right. Because it is going to take every one of us," he said. "Every one. And we simply cannot fail."

The next Regular Session of the Alabama Legislature begins March 5, but there is no shortage of things to do right now, Brasfield said.

"We must be successful in the 2019 session, and to a large degree, our success will hinge on our ability to speak with one voice," he said. ■

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## FUTURE OF ALABAMA'S LOCAL ROADS AND BRIDGES

*It was big news when Gov. Kay Ivey addressed the ACCA 90th Convention & Celebration in August, and journalists also swarmed around Tuscaloosa Mayor Walt Maddox, the Democratic Party's gubernatorial nominee. Both have expressed strong support for infrastructure investment.*

### Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey on Infrastructure

Source: [www.governor.alabama.gov/priorities](http://www.governor.alabama.gov/priorities)

"Transportation is a critical component to job creation efforts. Companies want to create jobs in areas where their goods can be made and sold globally. A modern transportation infrastructure helps create jobs!"

"Governor Ivey is working hard to make sure our state's infrastructure keeps up with the needs of our growing economy. One of her top priorities is making sure that our citizens can easily get to the places they need to go with safe transportation infrastructure."



### Tuscaloosa Mayor Walt Maddox on Infrastructure

Source: [www.waltmaddox.com/issues](http://www.waltmaddox.com/issues)

"When our roadways and bridges are not safe, Alabamians are not safe, and new jobs will not come because they can't pass along our roads to develop the industry. Alabamians are cut off from the economy, health care, and ultimately, their future.

We cannot ignore this problem any longer. As Governor, we will pass bipartisan legislation supported by the Alabama Alliance for Infrastructure and begin rebuilding Alabama's roads and bridges."



## 2018 Safety AWARDS

### Category 1

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place ~ Henry County
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Place ~ Coosa County
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Place ~ Choctaw County

### Category 2

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place ~ Conecuh County
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Place ~ Monroe County
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Place ~ Randolph County

### Category 3

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place ~ St. Clair County
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Place ~ DeKalb County
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Place ~ Russell County

*Presented by the ACCA Liability Self-Insurance Fund Inc.*

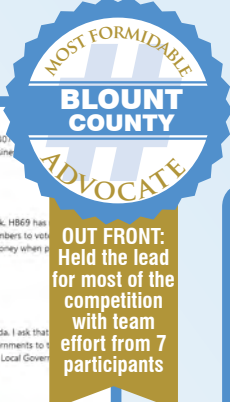
# ALCOUNTIES

# Tweet

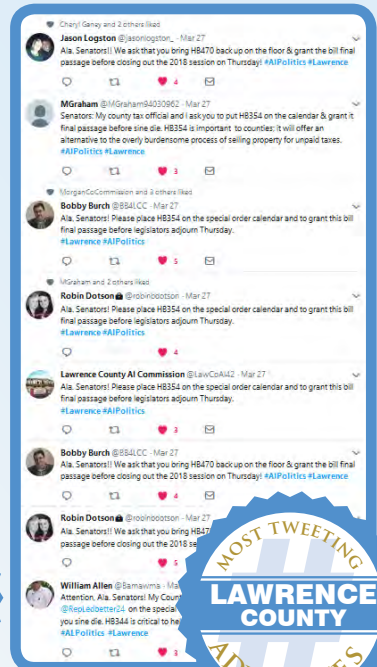
# CONTEST



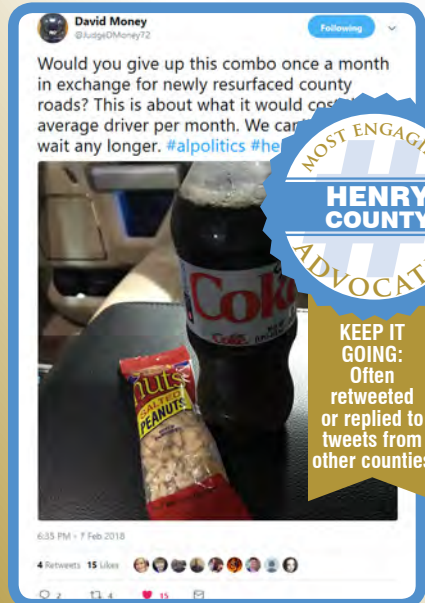
OVERALL WINNER  
*MORGAN COUNTY*  
*Tweeted 866 times during the 12-week competition*



OUT FRONT:  
Held the lead for most of the competition with team effort from 7 participants



GO TEAM:  
Had 8 different county representatives participating



ON MESSAGE:  
Tweeted daily about need for county road and bridge funding

# Top ACCA Honor Goes to Cooper

This year, ACCA bestowed its highest honor upon John Cooper in recognition of his exceptional leadership in his role as director of the Alabama Department of Transportation.

Cooper and Ed Austin represented ALDOT at the ACCA convention, making a presentation about the Alabama Transportation Rehabilitation and Improvement Program (ATRIP) during a general session. But before they could make their exit, the director was called back to the podium.

“The collaboration and cooperation between counties and ALDOT have never been better than during ATRIP,” said ACCA Executive Director Sonny Brasfield. “As director, you set the tone and the pace for this massive undertaking that has had a tremendous impact on every corner of the state. On behalf of the 67 counties, I’d like to express our deepest gratitude.”

The response from local governments was overwhelming, and it quickly became apparent that the need was greater than anticipated. There was no shortage of compelling reasons to fund this or that project, whether it was a heavily traveled thoroughfare, a worn-out bridge causing miles of detours for school buses or a vital route connecting lower-tier automotive suppliers.

When the remaining projects are finalized, ATRIP is expected to be a \$1.2 billion investment in local infrastructure. Of that, more than \$700 million has gone into county roads and bridges. For perspective from the local level, many counties completed 15-20 years’ worth of work in less than five years.

Cooper’s management, administrative and leadership skills have been essential to the success of this vast, fast-paced and complex initiative. He chaired the ATRIP Advisory Committee — a seven-member panel where elected officials were in the majority — and there he

built consensus, so the committee could set eligibility parameters, review more than a thousand eligible projects and recommend projects for funding. Final project selections were made by the governor.

He also mobilized staff throughout ALDOT to expedite ATRIP projects and established a new unit within the agency — the Innovative Programs Bureau — to oversee ATRIP and provide technical support to the advisory committee. In addition, Cooper was an important voice at the Statehouse when legislation was necessary to create the Rural Assistance Match Program (RAMP), which made it possible for many counties to participate in ATRIP.

Cooper entered public service in 2011, bringing his management expertise to bear on Alabama’s roads and bridges at the state and local level. He had retired a few years earlier as chief executive officer of Avocent Corporation, a global provider of information technology infrastructure management based in Huntsville.

During his private sector career, he also held the positions of chief financial officer and corporate vice president, as well as partner in large accounting firms. He holds bachelor’s and master’s degrees in accounting from The University of Alabama.

The award for Outstanding Contribution to County Government is given each year to someone who has not only made significant contributions of time, talent and energy to better county government in Alabama but also gone beyond the call of duty to make a difference for all 67 counties. ■



John Cooper (left), director of the Alabama Department of Transportation, accepted the Outstanding Contribution to County Government Award from ACCA Executive Director Sonny Brasfield.

# 2018

## Alabama County Bid Alliance



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## IN PROFILE

# Vice President Randy Vest

It may not be enough for 67 counties to speak with One Voice now that Randy Vest is an officer. The longtime gospel musician could put counties on the path to singing with One Voice.

Vest, a two-term commissioner from Morgan County, has just been elected vice president of the Association of County Commissions of Alabama. According to the traditional officer rotation, he will be sworn in as ACCA president in August 2020.

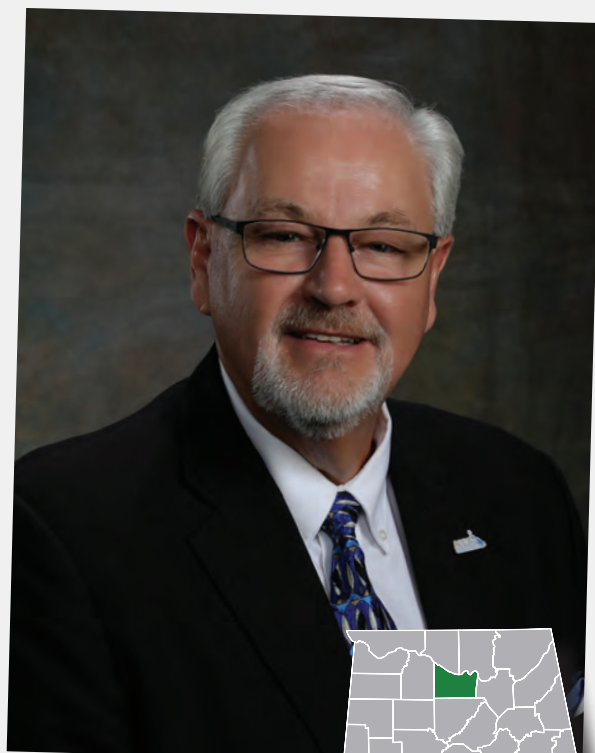
In every field of endeavor, the Association's effectiveness hinges on county unity, he said, just like singing in unison. "I'd encourage every commissioner to be the servant leader that the people expect of them and to take a greater role and be committed to work toward the good of all 67 counties."

He urges fellow commissioners throughout the state to call on him.

"If there's any way I can help them, I'll be more than willing to try," said Vest, 59. "There's no embarrassment in sharing a need, because chances are — out of 67 counties — someone else has already had that need and had to deal with it. The experience of how they worked through that process is very valuable to each of us."

Morgan County has a solid track record of deep engagement in the Association by both elected officials and department heads. In fact, Chairman Ray Long served as 2015-2016 ACCA President and has remained active on the Board of Directors.

Vest's fellow commissioners made sure he got plugged in with the Association from the beginning, both for what he would gain and for what he could contribute to "67 Counties, One Voice." He completed the mandatory education program for commissioners, went on to achieve graduate-level certification from the Alabama Local Government Training Institute and actively



## Get to Know...

**Hon. Randy Vest,**  
**ACCA Vice President**  
**Morgan County's District 2**  
**Commissioner since 2010**

### PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

- Former small business owner with about 30 years in the family automotive repair shop
- Maintenance supervisor at an industrial coatings facility from 2002-2010

**EDUCATION** Level II Certificate, Alabama Local Government Training Institute

**FAMILY** Three adult children and seven grandchildren

### PERSONAL INTERESTS

- Life-long gospel vocalist and musician
- Devoted grandfather who loves teaching grandchildren to fish, use a lawnmower and drive a tractor
- Superfan of grandsons' sports teams
- Lover of long drives in his convertible with his wife of almost 41 years

### ACCA ENGAGEMENT

- Member, PLAN 2016, the inaugural class of the Association's leadership program
- Member, 2017-2018 Legislative Committee
- Presenter, 2016 Association of County Administrators of Alabama Conference, on subject of reforming boards of registrars

### STATE-LEVEL LEADERSHIP

- Alabama Board of Registrars Legislation Task Force Member, appointed by Secretary of State John Merrill

@RandyVest256

Randy Vest

[rvest@co.morgan.al.us](mailto:rvest@co.morgan.al.us)

(256) 260-5556

participated in conferences and legislative efforts.

About four years ago, Vest was among the first participants in the Association's program for second-term commissioners, PLAN (Passion – Leadership – Accountability – Networking). He said he learned a great deal from discussing county issues with colleagues from around the state, and the program made an unexpected impact on the county park in his district.

He had been working to improve Charles H. Sparkman West Park since he came into office, and he focused his "passion project" on additional upgrades. Things were well underway when a motivational speaker addressed PLAN.

"One of the things she emphasized was we might be good communicators as far as speaking what was on our mind to people, but sometimes we failed to be good listeners," Vest said. Shortly thereafter, a park employee suggested adding an archery range. "I didn't know anything about archery, and I probably would have just blown that off, but after that motivational speaker encouraged us to listen, I said, 'Let's hear your idea.'"

He listened, researched the sport's popularity and visited competitions. Before long, Morgan County moved forward with new facilities at the park, which now hosts archery tournaments.

Vest said he had been encouraged for several years to take on a greater role in ACCA, much like the encouragement he had received to run for the county commission. He faces no opposition in November for election to a third term.

A life-long resident of Morgan County, Vest lettered in three varsity sports in high school. There was the possibility of a football scholarship from Mississippi State, but he turned that down and, upon graduation, bought partnership in the family business and married his high school sweetheart. Today the Vests make their home outside Hartselle.

When asked about life experiences that prepared him for public service, Vest named gospel music, church leadership roles and owning a successful small business.

The church and sacred music have helped him build people skills. He was only 12 years old when he started playing guitar in The Vest Quartet, his family's Southern gospel group that regularly performed in Alabama and neighboring states. By about age 16, he was singing, too, usually taking the bass part. He later performed in several ensembles, including his own semi-professional group called Heart to Heart.

"We would go to nursing homes and churches and most any place where the door was open to us," he recalled.

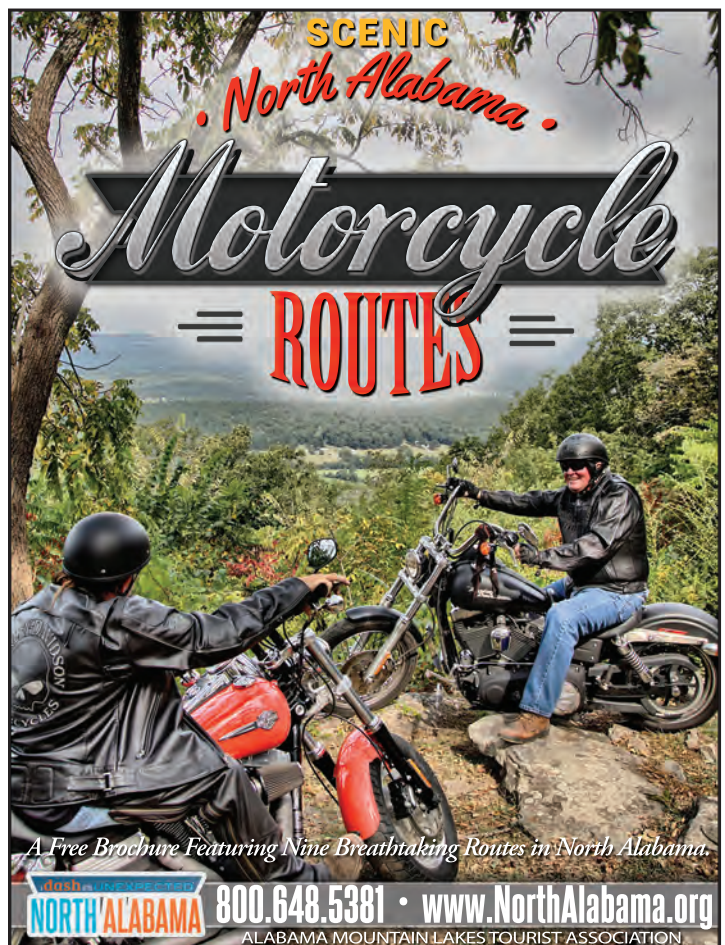
For about two decades, he and his wife were co-

worship leaders in their home church. Along the way, he became active in The Gideons International and served as a certified lay speaker — or substitute preacher — for Methodist churches throughout north Alabama.

Vest said his dad first encouraged him to run for public office back in the late 1980s. "He just said with my personality and the way I handled individuals and dealing with the public and my business experience, he just felt like it was something I would be good at," Vest said.

For all his seriousness about important matters, Vest's quirky sense of humor emerges easily — and frequently — during conversation. He describes the joy of watching the family grow as the first grandson was born, followed by a second grandson and a third and so on until there were six boys ages 13 and under. But finally, a little more than a year ago, a granddaughter was born. "We're thinking by the age of 3 she may learn to walk," he said, likely with a wide grin on his face. "Nobody's put her down long enough yet."

Vest says when he first ran for public office, he told voters, "I guess I'm just naïve enough to think I can make a difference." And his heart is in the same place as he takes on responsibilities to help all 67 counties. "I still feel that way. I just believe that if an individual so chooses, that they can make a difference." ■





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# Chambers County's Strength is Woven In

Alabama's top five counties for new job announcements last year looks an awful lot like a list of the most populous counties — with one glaring exception: Chambers County. This eastern Alabama county, once dominated by the textile industry, punches above its weight class in economic development, and county leaders say the Community Branding Initiative is an important outgrowth of that success.

The initiative earned a coveted



Excellence in County Government Award, presented by ACCA annually to recognize commission-initiated projects and programs that are outstanding in quality or innovative in approach. There are separate urban and rural categories, and Chambers County was recognized in the category for counties with fewer than 50,000 residents.

Visually, the logo's key element is a simple pattern that looks like a close-up of fabric. The tagline, "Strength Woven In," connects with the past and builds on the theme of resiliency. For the birthplace of "Fighting Joe Louis," there are touchstones of local history that embody this strength and resiliency, from the recent economic recovery to 1947, when enough citizens donated a day's pay to keep the local



*2018 Excellence in County Government Award*

| RURAL CATEGORY |  
Chambers County Community Branding Initiative

hospital open.

"It is very unusual for a community with a population our size — with less than 35,000 people countywide — to invest in itself and recognize the importance of branding and telling our story," stated the county's nomination materials. "The success in getting countywide adoption of the brand is truly a testament to the innovation and determination of our county leaders."



2018-2019 ACCA President Tony Cherry (second from left) congratulates Chambers County leaders on winning this year's Excellence in County Government Award in the Rural Category. Present to accept the award were (standing from left) Engineer Josh Harvill, Cherry, Commissioner Sam Bradford, Administrator Regina Chambers and Commissioners Debbie Wood, Douglas Jones, David Eastridge and Joe Blanks.



Widespread adoption of the new brand has been a signature achievement. The logo and tagline have been implemented by the county commission, county departments, six municipalities, the countywide development authority, two public school systems, a chamber of commerce, the county library and a pair of fire and water districts.

The county commission's key partners on the branding initiative have been the Chambers County Development Authority, PowerSouth Energy Cooperative and the Greater Valley Area Chamber of Commerce. A communications firm retained to develop the new brand reported to a six-member steering committee.

The development authority covered the cost of customizing the brand for each additional

jurisdiction or organization, but each brand partner has been responsible for updating signage, letterhead, vehicle graphics and other items.

The biggest initial challenge was getting buy-in from others in the community, and it was only overcome through numerous personal meetings. Despite the apparent success, county leaders said the sales pitch is ongoing because of election turnover and personnel changes among the brand partners.

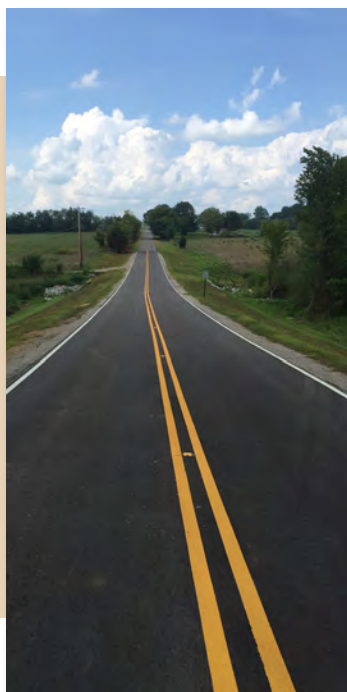
"Our community branding has given us a way to talk about our community's resiliency," the nomination stated. "It helps us stand out from other communities and has built an extremely strong sense of pride and self-awareness in our community." ■



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# Commission Helps Students Step Back in Time

The Baldwin County Commission took home an Excellence in County Government Award this year for its Bicentennial Field Trip Program that has brought local history to life.

ACCA presents the Excellence in County Government Awards annually to recognize commission-initiated projects and programs that are outstanding in quality or innovative in approach. There are separate urban and rural categories, and Baldwin County was recognized in the category for counties with more than 50,000 residents.

The field trip program, which earned endorsement from the Alabama Bicentennial Commission, is focused on helping third- and fourth-graders immerse themselves in the typical lessons and activities of a century ago in a classic one-room schoolhouse.

At one time, more than 90 small, community schools dotted the county, many built following the state-approved plan for one-room schoolhouses. The historic Blakely School building, better known as the Little Red Schoolhouse, was built in 1920 by African-American families in the Bromley community. It had been preserved as a museum for more than 30 years and moved to a site in Bay Minette near the county board of education's office.

In an effort to improve public access to the historic structure,



2018-2019 ACCA President Tony Cherry (at left) congratulates Baldwin County leaders on winning this year's Excellence in County Government Award in the Urban Category. Present to accept the award were (from right) Commissioners Chris Elliott and Tucker Dorsey, Archives Director Felisha Anderson and Commissioner Skip Gruber.

the Baldwin County Commission arranged for it to be relocated to the county's Bicentennial Park in Stockton, alongside a historic church, general store, blacksmith's shop and Native American exhibits.

The commission's investment did not stop there, however. The county's full-time director of archives and history has devoted significant time to developing curriculum in consultation with the local school system. In addition, she and other county staff members team up with community volunteers to present educational programming to visiting groups every Wednesday during the school year.

The initial goal was to serve 300 students during the 2017-2018 academic year. The actual results far exceeded that goal, with 457 students visiting during the first year.

Visiting students get to step

back in time multiple generations. Inside the schoolhouse, it is the 1921-1922 school year, and the community has recently welcomed back veterans of The Great War, now usually called World War I. Grades one through eight are all together in one room, and the U.S. flag hanging near the blackboard carries only 48 stars. Lessons cover reading, writing, arithmetic and spelling. Period-appropriate games, such as drop the handkerchief, are played during recess.

"Year number one was a huge success," states the county's nominating materials. "Students visiting the historic community learned in a more hands-on, interactive manner than they do in school."

The county also emphasized the program's benefit to taxpayers, citing research indicating that field

trips correlate with lifelong success for students.

The program has also brought the county commission into connection with a range of community partners, including the Baldwin County Retired Educators Association, Baldwin County Board of Education, Baldwin County Storytelling Club and local historians. ■

*2018 Excellence in  
County Government  
Award*

| URBAN CATEGORY |  
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During the 2017-2018 school year, the Baldwin County Bicentennial Field Trip Program welcomed 457 students from public, private and homeschool settings. Participation exceeded the program's goal by more than 50 percent.

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# 50 Years of 9-1-1 Service

Special events celebrating the 50th anniversary of 9-1-1 have been going on throughout the country all year, and the Alabama Association of 9-1-1 Districts (AAND) made sure there was recognition during the recent ACCA convention.

After all, the first 9-1-1 call was dialed on a rotary phone in Alabama.

During the ACCA Awards Ceremony, AAND President Gordon Sandlin gave a brief history and presented a special commemorative coin to representatives of Winston County, the birthplace of 9-1-1.

"On Feb. 16, 1968, the country's very first 9-1-1 call was made right here in the great state of Alabama. Rankin Fite, who was the speaker of the Alabama House of Representatives at the time, placed the first ceremonial 9-1-1 call while sitting in the office of then-Haleyville mayor, James Whitt," Sandlin said. "Just a few yards up the block was Congressman Tom Beville sitting at the police station, where he answered that phone call with a simple 'hello.'"

Until that time, citizens had to dial a full-length phone number to reach any kind of emergency services. Callers had to sort out for themselves what kind of help they needed, and they also had to guess what agency had jurisdiction. Did they need a municipal police officer or a county deputy?


The idea was revolutionary: a single, easy-to-remember phone number that would reach any kind of first responder.

It began as a race between the Alabama Telephone Company and AT&T to start America's first 9-1-1 system, explained Sandlin, Cullman County's 9-1-1 director. "Fifty years later, it has expanded to a nationwide system that is continuously improving to keep up with rapidly changing technology," he said. "And it all began in a little town in Winston County, Alabama." ■




The first 9-1-1 call in the country occurred exactly 50 years ago in Winston County, Ala. In honor of that anniversary, the Alabama Association of 9-1-1 Districts made a special presentation to County Commission Chairman Roger Hayes (right) and Tim Webb, director of the Winston County E 9-1-1 Communications District.

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- Erica Norris | Lee County
- Belinda Smith | Lee County
- Thelma Hardmon | Macon County
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- Brenda Driskell | Mobile County
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- Demetria Turk-Scott | Wilcox County

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- Crystal Rice, CCRO | Baldwin County
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- Daniel White, CCRO | Cullman County

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- Ashley Jackson, ACPS | Baldwin County

### *Alabama Certified Risk Management Specialist*

- Andrea Crenshaw, ACRMS | Baldwin County
- Andrea Roberson, ACRMS | Baldwin County
- John Tucker, ACRMS | Cullman County



# A Foundation of Leadership

The future of county government is undoubtedly brighter thanks to the leadership of four past presidents who will conclude their years of county commission service next month.

Tony Cherry, the current president, had only been in office a few hours when he took time in his inaugural address to express gratitude to these individuals who have meant so much to the “One Voice” of county government.

“Tonight, before we look ahead, it is essential that we look at those who have laid the foundation upon which our future successes will be constructed,” Cherry said.

As a token of appreciation, the outgoing past presidents were presented with an official map of Alabama from 1929, the year of ACCA’s organization.

“We hope each of you will find a place to hang this map so that you will remember all of us, how grateful we are for your leadership and — most importantly — the friendships we have all built as we have created One strong voice for our 67 counties,” Cherry said before recounting a few of the honorees’ outstanding contributions.

Tuscaloosa County Probate Judge and Chairman Hardy McCollum is the longest-serving county commissioner in office today. His term as president began in 1995, a time marked by division within the Association, and he is credited with strengthening unity. As president, he exhorted the 67 counties to work together as a family. There would be disagreements from time to time, but, in the end, families always come home.



These four past presidents of the Association are completing their county commission service this year: (from left) Bill Strickland (Marshall), Hardy McCollum (Tuscaloosa), Tim Choate (Etowah) and Debbie Wood (Chambers).

Under ACCA bylaws, past presidents continue to serve on the Board of Directors as long as they hold county commission office, so McCollum has amassed more than 20 years of active leadership in the Association.

Etowah County Commissioner Tim Choate became president in 2011, in the thick of efforts to provide for the future of 9-1-1 programs across Alabama. During his presidency, legislators enacted a statewide solution for 9-1-1 funding that improves quality of life for everyone in Alabama. It was also under his leadership that the organization adopted the phrase “67 Counties, One Voice,” which has become a rallying cry for county unity.

Chambers County Commissioner Debbie Wood became president in 2013, a challenging time in the life of the Association, and she revitalized the organization with a vision that

commissioners, sheriffs, tax officials and probate judges should work together. This November, she is in the running for a seat in the Alabama House of Representatives, where she would become an invaluable member of the unofficial County Caucus.

As president in 2016-2017, Marshall County Commissioner Bill Strickland challenged fellow commissioners to secure additional funding for county roads and bridges, and then he led the charge without regard for personal sacrifice or political risk.

Strickland “helped us forge a legislative proposal that should have been passed two years ago,” Cherry said. “Bill, I want you to hear me promise you that as our new president, I will do everything humanly possible to finish the mission that has been set before me. And when we are successful, we will have you back here to celebrate with us.” ■

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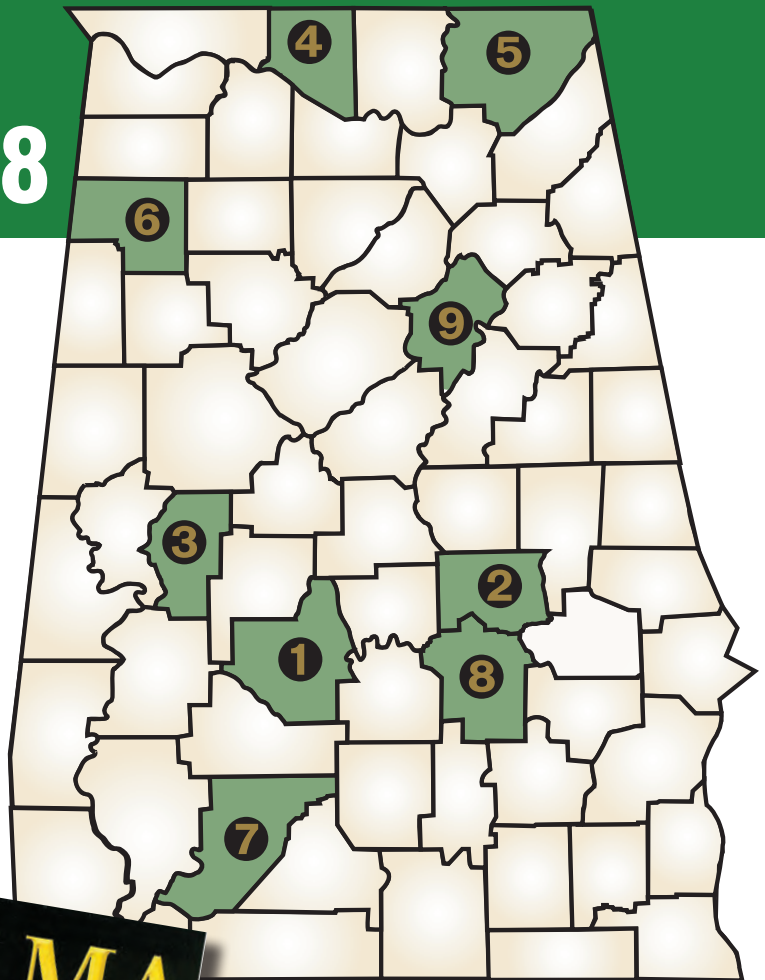
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# Time Capsule Sealed until 2028

The overarching theme of ACCA's 90th Convention & Celebration was "Where We've Been, Where We Are and Where We're Going," and a county government time capsule was created to document the triumphs and challenges at the local level in 2018.

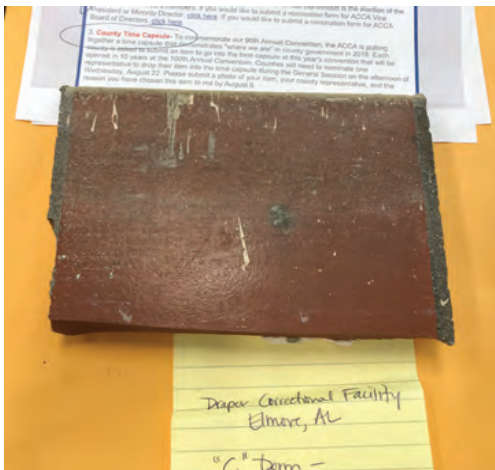
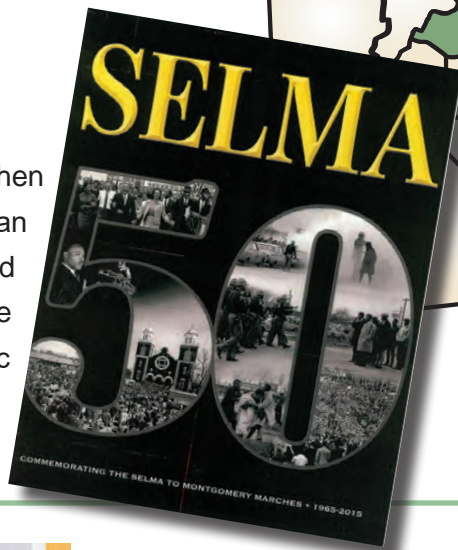
Despite the differences among the 67 counties, the chosen artifacts reflected some common themes, such as marking economic development successes, highlighting unique scenic beauty and anticipating a brighter future for local roads and bridges.

The time capsule will be opened during the Association's 100th anniversary festivities in 2028. What follows are a few highlights of items chosen to represent 2018. Special appreciation is expressed to everyone who helped capture this moment in time in Alabama counties.



## 1 DALLAS

This booklet commemorates the 2015 Bridge Crossing Jubilee, when the country's first African-American president, Barack Obama, walked across the Edmund Pettus Bridge with foot soldiers from the historic Selma-to-Montgomery Voting Rights March.



## 2 ELMORE

This floor tile came from Draper Correctional Facility, Alabama's oldest male prison facility in active service at the beginning of 2018. The institution has since closed, and the commission hopes to see a new state facility in its place by 2028.

## 3 HALE

To document poor road conditions, Hale County commissioners submitted this photo of a heavily potholed section of Daisy Lane in District 2. They hope that this road will once again be safe for citizens to travel by 2028.

## 4 Limestone

Construction of Mazda Toyota Manufacturing U.S.A. Inc.'s \$1.6 billion facility will soon change the landscape in the southeastern part of the county. The plant, expected to employ 4,000 people, is projected to begin operations in 2021.



## 5 JACKSON

Signaling a bright future for the state's north-eastern corner, Jackson County commissioners included a photo from the groundbreaking ceremony for Google's \$600 million data center, slated to begin operations in 2019.



## 7 MONROE

This year, commissioners helped cut the ribbon at the grand opening of the Tunnel Springs Rail Trail Bicycle and Hiking Path, a new destination for outdoor recreation so that more residents can enjoy their beautiful surroundings.



## 6 MARION

This segment of fiber-optic cable signals the transformative impact expected from the high-speed internet connectivity spreading throughout the county as the Freedom Fiber network grows.



## 8 MONTGOMERY

A coin representing the Bitcoin cryptocurrency symbolized the ransomware attack that sparked major improvements in the county's cyber security



measures and inserted a teachable moment into the time capsule ceremony.

## 9 ST. CLAIR

The state's bicentennial is coming up next year, but St. Clair County marked its own 200th anniversary this year with a commemorative calendar featuring this photo of the county commission.



# AFFILIATE GROUPS

## At the Heart of ACCA's Arsenal



Panelists expressed a lot of passion for their work in county government, with several comments that it was “more than just a job” to them. Pictured, from left: Moderator David Money, Anthony Crear, Raye Ann Calton, Betty Peterson, Eddie Hicks and Donnie Smith.



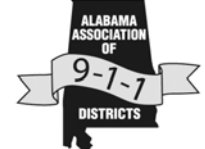
Engineer Anthony Crear from Sumter County (at left) said he was advised early in his career, “your job is to make the commissioners look good.”

The celebration of ACCA's 90th anniversary would not have been complete without shining the spotlight on the affiliate groups, professional organizations for county staff leaders in five specialties.

“Each of our affiliate groups plays a critical role in allowing us to efficiently and effectively conduct county business on the local level every day. We must continue to draw off the expertise of folks like this,” said David Money, probate judge and commission chairman in Henry County. “It is more essential than ever that our groups receive the continuing education necessary to do the job they're asked to do.”

Money moderated “Learning from Our Leaders,” an hour-long panel discussion featuring a representative from each group:

- Raye Ann Calton, Barbour County, Association of County Administrators of Alabama (ACAA)
- Anthony Crear, Sumter County, Association of County Engineers of Alabama (ACEA)



- Eddie Hicks, Morgan County, Alabama Association of Emergency Managers (AAEM)
- Donnie Smith, Chambers County, Alabama Association of 9-1-1 Districts (AAND)
- Betty Peterson, Madison County, County Revenue Officers Association of Alabama (CROAA)

The connections forged among the county family are invaluable, Calton said, and can help newer administrators accelerate their on-the-job learning.

“Reach out to other administrators. Make the time to attend the meetings. We have regional meetings of county administrators where we get to know each other and form a relationship,” she said. “There’s really no problem that your county is facing that somebody else hasn’t already done and figured out.”

The importance of professional development provided by the affiliate groups was underscored again and again.

"The challenge that we have, even though you have someone that has a degree in emergency management, is to then motivate them to continually get additional classes," Hicks said. "That's the thing about our field; emergency management has changed tremendously over the years."

Coping with constant change was another recurring theme in the discussion, and affiliate groups are often proactive change agents. AAND is a prime example. Not so long ago, the financial support for 9-1-1 in the state was dependent on a dwindling number of landline phones. Legislation was necessary to ensure the future of 9-1-1, and the successful reform effort was led by ACCA and AAND.

Today, vital 9-1-1 services are financially supported by wireless and landline customers,

and revenue is distributed in a manner that ensures reliable service in urban and rural areas. "That certainly would not have been possible without the support of this group and without Sonny (Brasfield). His office was where the legislation was being hammered out," Smith said, referring to the ACCA executive director. "It has been very positive for the 9-1-1 community across this state."

Early in CROAA's history, the group fought off a legislative attempt to prevent counties from collecting their own taxes. The next year, counties came back and pushed through a bill that strengthened the self-collection authority.

"Who watches your henhouse? The one who is right there," Peterson said. "We know our communities."

For his part, Brasfield

continually asks commissioners to renew their support for the time and cost necessary for their staff to be leaders in affiliate groups. The groups are so important to ACCA that momentum is growing to establish a stronger connection with jail staff.

Highly effective commissioners know that strong leadership at the staff level makes their jobs easier, and the most valuable staff leaders understand their role and the limits of their influence.

The biggest challenge for a staff leader? "Saying 'no' to a commissioner," Crear said. However, as difficult as it can be for both parties, sometimes "no" is in the commission's best interest.

"All of us in the room know there are times when you have to tell people things that are inflexible," he said, "but that also comes with the role of leadership." ■

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# PLAN 2018: Passion for Public Service at the Local Level

If the success stories of PLAN 2018 participants are any indication, the leadership program more than delivers on its promise to help successful leaders have a greater impact in their home counties and in their Association.

Members of PLAN 2018 embarked on an 18-month journey together to activate their passion for public service, enhance their leadership skills, hold each other accountable and network with their peers. All have undertaken Passion Projects at the local level, and several members shared their inspiring success stories during ACCA's 90th Anniversary Convention & Celebration.

**Success Stories** To learn more about all the Passion Projects undertaken by members of PLAN 2018, take a look at the booklet at [www.alabamacounties.org/plan](http://www.alabamacounties.org/plan)



**MARCIE FOSTER,  
COMMISSIONER**

Cherokee County  
marciefofoster@cherokee-county-al.gov

## PASSION PROJECT

### Mental Illness Reduction in County Jails

## PROJECT GOAL

Develop and implement a data-driven plan to reduce the number of individuals with mental illnesses in county jails

## PROJECT BENEFIT TO COMMUNITY

Approaching the mental illness epidemic in jails with a knowledgeable, strategic plan will allow county leaders to effectively identify, treat and care for these vulnerable individuals in the manner they need and deserve.

### • Passion Project wins grant for Cherokee County

Cherokee County has been awarded a grant from the Alabama Department of Mental Health — thanks to the leadership of Commissioner Marcie Foster and involvement of the Cherokee County Commission in the national initiative, Stepping Up: Reducing Mental Illness in Jails. The grant will provide a case manager to deliver coordinated services and to decrease the number of individuals with mental illness and substance use disorders in the county jail. Grants were only available to counties participating in the Stepping Up initiative, which Foster, a member of the PLAN Class of 2018, chose as her Passion Project.



**JERRY TINGLE,  
COMMISSIONER**

Tuscaloosa County  
jtingle@tuscco.com

## PASSION PROJECT

### Community History Conversations

## PROJECT GOAL

Initiating community gatherings to encourage the exchange of historical county information

## PROJECT BENEFIT TO COMMUNITY

Conducting events and activities to facilitate historical conversations throughout Tuscaloosa County will allow county leaders and residents an opportunity to come together to collectively learn and examine their past, assess their present and purposefully plan for their future.



**RONDA WALKER,  
VICE CHAIR**

Montgomery County  
rondawalker@mc-ala.org

## PASSION PROJECT

### #BroadbandNow

## PROJECT GOALS

Providing a guide for counties to utilize in enhancing their broadband infrastructure  
Reinforcing the critical need for high-speed internet capacity throughout Alabama

## PROJECT BENEFIT TO COMMUNITY

Creating a broadband guide will help move the state forward in addressing its need for broadband expansion, and in turn, help counties better attract new business, improve rural healthcare and enhance educational opportunities.

## PLAN 2018 Participants

Jay Thompson | Autauga  
Joey Peavy | Butler  
Marcie Foster | Cherokee  
Ray Milstead | Clay  
Laura Cobb | Cleburne  
Jimmy Jones | Coffee  
David Black | Colbert  
Mark Blankenship | Dale  
Steve Haraway | Madison  
Dan Harris | Montgomery  
Ronda Walker | Montgomery  
Larry Roberts | Randolph  
Chance Corbett | Russell  
Jerry Tingle | Tuscaloosa  
Keith Davis | Walker  
Bill Albritton | Wilcox



**KEITH DAVIS,  
COMMISSIONER**

Walker County  
k.davis@walkercountyal.us

## PASSION PROJECT

### Walker County Acts of Kindness

## PROJECT GOALS

Impacting a life each day through an act of kindness  
Promoting the good in Walker County  
Partnering with community organizations and churches to expand the reach of kind acts and projects

## PROJECT BENEFIT TO COMMUNITY

Bringing awareness to the importance of kindness and the magnitude to which small acts of kindness can impact individuals and a community as a whole will make Walker County and all of Alabama a better place to live, work and raise a family.



Like and Share the Walker County Acts Of Kindness Facebook page.

## The Purpose of PLAN

In 2013, the ACCA staff began to explore the benefits of sponsoring a leadership program that would bring county commissioners from across the state together to build upon their leadership skills. The idea was to take commissioners entering their second term of office and give them additional tools to become even more impactful county leaders. Now, almost five years since its inception, the 18-month Passion, Leadership, Accountability and Networking (PLAN) program has positively impacted more than 30 county commissioners from across the state.

The PLAN program, directed by the Association staff, is designed to develop practical and service-oriented leadership skills in its participants so they may become change-makers in their communities and beyond. Through various events, seminars and social outings, the PLAN participants build meaningful relationships with other county and state officials across Alabama — all with the goal of creating a larger sphere of influence for these rising leaders

### Do you ...

- Have a passion for serving your county?
- Want to be a more effective leader with a stronger network in the "county family?"
- Desire hands-on learning about specialized functions of county government, legislative affairs and Congressional advocacy?
- Begin your second term as a county commission member in November?\*
- Have a certificate of completion from the Alabama Local Government Training Institute for the mandatory Level I education program?

Applications for Class III of PLAN (2019-2020) are available at [www.alabamacounties.org/plan](http://www.alabamacounties.org/plan)

*\*Apply now, even if you have opposition in the General Election. Selections will not be finalized until after the election.*

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# WHAT COUNTIES NEED TO KNOW

## Emily's Law | Dangerous Dogs



**OVERVIEW** – Emily's Law (Act 2018-182) establishes a uniform procedure by which to declare a dog to be dangerous. It was effective June 1, 2018.

✔ The law **DOES**:

- ✔ Create a three-step process that starts with the filing of a **sworn statement**, followed by an **investigation** and court hearing.
- ✔ Impose specific responsibilities on animal control officers, county attorneys, and local law enforcement.
- ✔ Place strict requirements on the owner of any dog ultimately determined to be "dangerous".
- ✔ Only apply to the county when such incidents occur in its unincorporated areas

✖ This law **DOES NOT** restrict a county's power to adopt and enforce regulations that comply with the minimum standards set forth in this law.



### DEFINITIONS

✔ The law defines "**dangerous**" dog as: A dog, regardless of its breed, that has bitten, attacked, or caused physical injury, serious physical injury, or death to a person without justification, except a dog that is a police animal as defined by Ala. Code § 13A-11-260, used by law enforcement officials for legitimate law enforcement purposes.

✔ **Physical Injury vs. Serious Physical Injury**

- Physical Injury: Impairment of physical condition or substantial pain. Ala. Code § 13A-1-2(12)
- Serious Physical Injury: Physical injury which creates a substantial risk of death, or which causes serious and protracted disfigurement, protracted impairment of health, or protracted loss or impairment of the function of any bodily organ. Ala. Code § 13A-1-2(14)



### THREE-STEP PROCESS

#### 1 Step 1: Sworn Statement

Emily's Law is triggered when a person makes a formal claim that a dog is "dangerous." To make such a claim, a person must give a sworn statement before the county's sheriff and provide the following information:

- The dog owner's name (if known)
- The location of the dog
- The reason he/she believes the dog to be dangerous

#### 2 Step 2: Investigation

✔ Upon receiving the sworn statement, the sheriff must deliver the statement to the animal control officer.

- ✔ The law **requires** the animal control officer to investigate the situation.
- ✔ However, if the sworn statement includes claims that a dog has caused serious physical injury or death to a person, then the investigation must instead be carried out by a law enforcement officer.
- ✔ While Ala. Code §3-1-16 authorizes the county commission to employ an animal control officer, Alabama law does not require counties to employ animal control officers.
- ✔ If a county does not employ an animal control officer, then all duties mandated under Emily's Law **must be carried out by local law enforcement**. In this instance counties will not play an active role in the process.

✔ In the absence of a sworn statement, the animal control officer may initiate a dangerous dog investigation when a complaint is raised **AND** a person has been bitten, received physical injury or serious physical injury or has died as a result of a dog's actions.

✔ The law prohibits a dog that is the subject of an investigation from being relocated and/or having its ownership transferred pending the outcome of the investigation or any future hearings. The owner of the dog may consent to have a dog humanely euthanized in lieu of an investigation.

✔ If the investigation leads the animal control officer to believe the allegations are unfounded, then the animal control officer must submit the results of the investigation to his or her supervisor and inform the complainant of these findings. If the investigation does not support allegations of a dog biting, attacking, or causing physical injury or death to a person, then it will not meet the test for the dog to be classified as dangerous.

- ✓ Copies of the investigative findings must be maintained in the animal control office or the sheriff's office.
- ✓ If the investigation leads the animal control officer (or law enforcement officer) to believe that the allegations are true, then the following must occur:
  - ✓ The animal control officer or law enforcement officer must file a summons for the dog's owner, if known, with the district court.
  - ✓ The dog must be impounded at the county pound.
  - ✓ The animal control officer (or law enforcement officer) must send a copy of the investigation report to the county attorney.

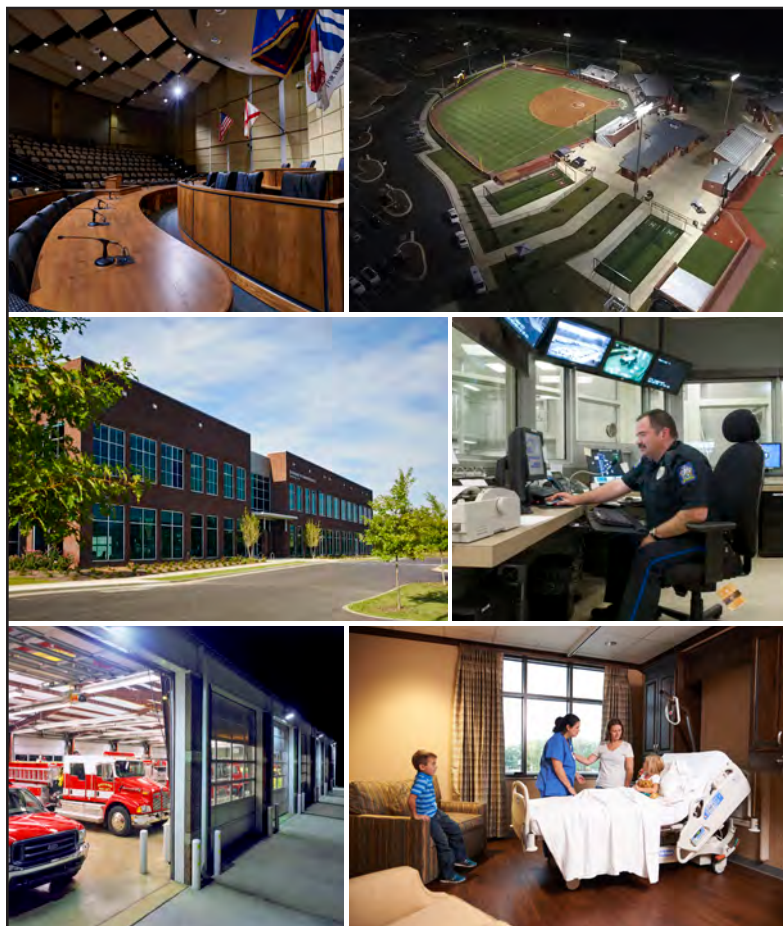
### \$ Recovering Costs:

- ✓ The law provides avenues for counties to make alternative arrangements for the impounding of the dog and to recoup the costs.
- ✓ The law permits the county to enter into a formal agreement with an animal shelter or licensed veterinarian to impound the dog.
- ✓ The owner of the dog must be given an opportunity to choose a veterinarian at which to impound the dog in lieu of the county pound or animal shelter. Either way, **the dog owner is liable to the county under the law for the costs and expenses associated with impounding, feeding, and caring for the dog.**

## ③ Step 3: Hearing

### 👤 Role of County Attorney

- ✓ Emily's Law authorizes the county attorney to file a petition in the district court to declare a dog to be dangerous if the dog caused physical injury, serious physical injury, or death.
- ✓ If the owner of the dog is known, then he or she must be served with a copy of the petition.
- ✓ All petitions by the county attorney to the district court must be in accordance with the Alabama Rules of Civil Procedure. Judicial determinations by the court may be appealed to the circuit court, with the order of the circuit court being final.
- ✓ At the court hearing, the county attorney **must present evidence** that the dog is dangerous. The court must find, by "reasonable satisfaction" that the dog bit, attacked, or caused physical injury, serious physical injury or death to a person **without justification** in order to declare the dog to be dangerous.
- ✓ "Reasonable satisfaction" is the normal standard in Alabama tort cases. This standard addresses the burden of persuasion and is interchangeable with preponderance of the evidence.
- ✓ If a dog was on property owned by its owner when the event at issue occurred or if the victim was trespassing on any property when the event occurred, then the dog is not to be presumed a dangerous dog pursuant to this act.



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## Court Determination

- ✓ If the court determines the dog is dangerous and has caused serious physical injury or death to a person, then the court **must** order that dog to be humanely euthanized by a licensed veterinarian or authorized animal control official.
- ✓ If the court determines the dog is dangerous but has NOT caused serious physical injury or death to a person, then the court must determine whether the dog is likely to cause future serious physical injury or death. If the court determines by reasonable satisfaction that the dog has such a propensity, the court **may** do one of the following:

Order that dog to be humanely euthanized by a licensed veterinarian or authorized animal control official.

### OR

Order the dog to be returned to its owner, **if all of the following conditions are met:**

- ✓ The dog is held in impound until the owner complies with all orders of the court. If the owner fails to comply within 30 days, the dog will be humanely euthanized;
- ✓ The dog is microchipped;
- ✓ The owner pays an annual dangerous dog registration fee of \$100 to the county, or a \$100 penalty payment for non-registration within two weeks;
- ✓ The owner pays all expenses involved with the investigation, pickup, and impoundment of the dog, as well as any court costs or fees related to the hearing;
- ✓ The owner provides a certification of the dog's current rabies vaccination;
- ✓ The dog is spayed or neutered;
- ✓ The owner obtains a surety bond of at least \$100,000 that covers dog bites, injuries or death caused by the dog;
- ✓ The owner provides proof to the court that a proper enclosure has been constructed to contain the dog.



*For more info on other related issues, such as a dog owner's criminal liability and cost recovery in such cases, view a presentation by ACCA Legislative Counsel Terri Reynolds at [www.alabamacounties.org/convention2018/thursday/](http://www.alabamacounties.org/convention2018/thursday/)*

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The past session of the Alabama Legislature was a productive one — five county priorities became law while harmful juvenile justice reforms did not.

Preparations are in high gear for 2019 — when the stakes will be even higher — since counties have set their sights on increased funding for roads and bridges.

A major step forward occurred at the local level over the summer, as each county designated its representative on the 2018-2019 ACCA Legislative Committee, chaired by Immediate Past President Steve McKinnon.

During pre-session preparations, the 67 committee members play a critical role in the process by which input from hundreds of county leaders around the state develops into a unified voice. Comments are collected from meetings with other county elected officials, the ACCA Minority Issues Steering Committee and affiliate group legislative committees for administrators, engineers, emergency managers, 9-1-1 leaders and revenue officers.

In 2019, top county issues — in addition to transportation funding — are expected to include:

- Updating the method for collecting online sales tax
- Enhancing county retirement benefits

These are among the issues considered by Legislative Committee members during their two-day workshop in late October, and they are also responsible for conducting a thorough review of the Alabama County Platform, recommending revisions and flagging priorities for the Board of Directors.

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

The Association will conduct District Meetings around the state in January and February. Because 2019 is the first year following an election year for the Legislature, the session will not begin until March 5, and it must end no later than June 17.

# FAMILY ALBUM



Photos from Alabama Counties



*Members of the 2017-2018 ACCA Board of Directors surprised Executive Director Sonny Brasfield with a special gift during the 90th Convention & Celebration. In honor of Brasfield's 30th anniversary with the Association, they presented a special framed resolution, which stated, "the Board of Directors of the Association, the Association staff and county leaders from all corners of the state wish to commend the outstanding efforts of Mr. Brasfield and extend their deepest appreciation for his consistency, commitment, support and friendship to the Alabama 'county family' for the past 30 years."*



@ALABAMACOUNTIES

*The County Agents Kitchen has been a favorite tradition at the ACCA Convention for decades. Special appreciation is expressed to the Alabama Association of County Agricultural Agents and Specialists for providing two delicious "farm-to-table" meals consisting entirely of food from Alabama growers.*



ALABAMA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY AGRICULTURAL AGENTS AND SPECIALISTS



*Convention-goers had the opportunity to stroll through 90 years of Association history, starting with the transcript of the organizational meeting. #67Celebrate90*



COUNTY COMMISSIONS OF ALABAMA



*In September, the County Golf Bash continued its 27-year winning streak as it brought county leaders and friends together in recognition of the Association's efforts to improve county government in Alabama. It was a beautiful day at Timberline Golf Club in Shelby County. #67counties #OneVoice*



@ALABAMACOUNTIES

**Please send your photos to ACCA for the Family Album!**  
County Commission magazine wants to publish a selection of member photos in every issue to showcase the many ways county government touches the lives of Alabamians and to recognize the dedicated men and women who make counties work. Please send photos (large file sizes preferred) to Abby Luker Fitzpatrick, Director of Communication & Engagement, [afitzpatrick@alabamacounties.org](mailto:afitzpatrick@alabamacounties.org).

## *County Revenue Officers Association of Alabama Awards 2018*



**Outstanding Contribution to CROAA**  
*Sonya Breasseale*  
JEFFERSON COUNTY



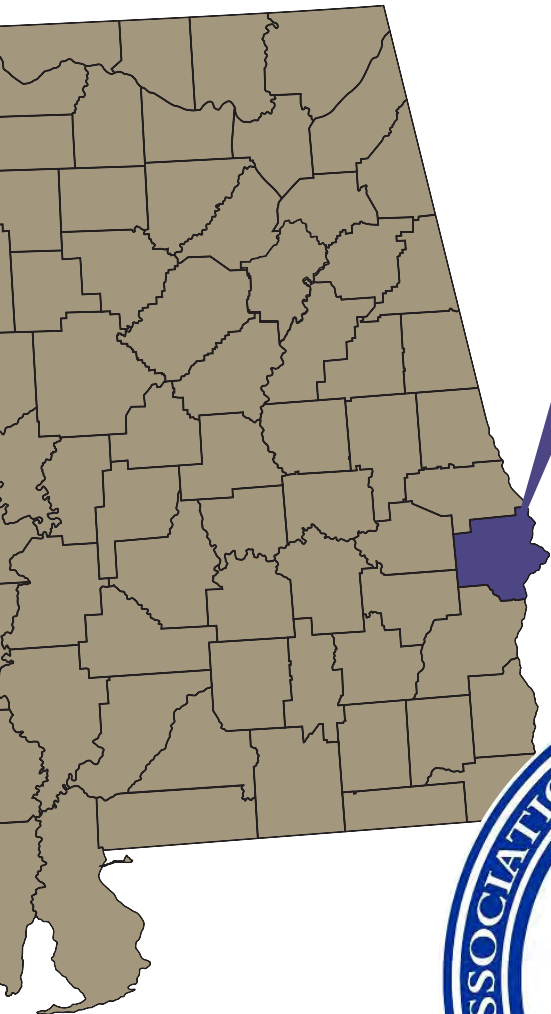
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## A voice from Alabama's 67 counties

**Bob Franklin,  
CLEM, MLEM**

*EMA Director, Russell County  
President, Alabama Association  
of Emergency Managers (AAEM)*



**Q** What are the key issues facing emergency managers at the local level?

**A** Building a culture of preparedness is one of the key issues facing emergency managers across the state. We are used to calling 9-1-1 and getting a fast response, but in a disaster, our local resources will be overwhelmed quickly. When citizens prepare now, it will help reduce the impact of a major disaster in the future.

Funding for emergency management programs is always an issue. Whether at the local or state level, emergency management is easily overlooked because of tight budgets and other pressing issues. We must keep our programs up-to-date in order to make a positive impact on our communities.

**Q** What can be done to ensure Alabama is prepared for the next disaster?

**A** We should be building on our lessons learned from previous disasters. That is one constant that I see when I talk to other emergency managers across the state, they are always reviewing what they can do differently to have a better outcome for their citizens.

**Q** Transportation infrastructure has been

getting a lot of attention from the White House, and ACCA is making road funding a top issue for 2019. From an EMA perspective, what are some consequences of inadequate and poorly maintained roads and bridges?

**A** Maintaining our roads and bridges is vital to citizens, schools and businesses. We must have the funding to maintain our ditches and culverts; when debris accumulates, that can cause our roadways to fail during a heavy rain. Another thing that is often overlooked when road funding is short are the consequences when a disaster, such as flooding, strikes. While we assume FEMA will come in and fund road repair projects at 75 percent when we receive a declaration for categories C through G, FEMA's project managers are going to review the road department's maintenance records to see if the road was maintained. If it wasn't, they may reduce the amount of funding we would receive.

**Q** What do you see as priorities for AAEM?

**A** One priority I have is to work with our partners and colleagues to grow AAEM into an information-sharing, networking and collaboration destination for other emergency management professionals who are not affiliated with a local or state emergency management program. For instance, we reached out to our colleges and universities across Alabama, most of which have a person designated as their emergency manager, to assess interest in developing an Institution of Higher Education Caucus within the AAEM. We had some positive feedback, and the caucus is on its way to becoming a reality.

We also need to take a hard look at how we are investing in

preparedness at the local level. Capabilities vary widely from county to county, and there may be opportunities for better cooperation in planning, procurement and operations. The same is true for severe weather warnings. We also have to focus on the 13 counties that are not in either county-to-county mutual aid compacts and see where the disconnect is. Having a mutual aid compact in place before a disaster will help you answer the “where can we get help?” question before and during an event.

**Q** Many new county commissioners will take office next month. What's your best advice to your colleagues for establishing good working relationships with newly elected commissioners?

**A** Strong connections and working relationships between elected officials and emergency managers are critical. Emergency managers should develop a relationship early with new commissioners, because commissioners have key roles in emergency management, particularly in policy administration and support for emergency services during events.

**Q** What does “67 Counties, One Voice” mean to you?

**A** To me, it means we are all in it together, through the good and the bad. Every county has similar problems that may be difficult to overcome individually, but when you place the collective power of the ACCA together, we can accomplish so much more. ■



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