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COUNTY COMMISSION

Volume 63, Number 3
July 2019

91st Annual Convention

REBUILD & Refocus ALABAMA

ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY COMMISSIONS OF ALABAMA
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Census
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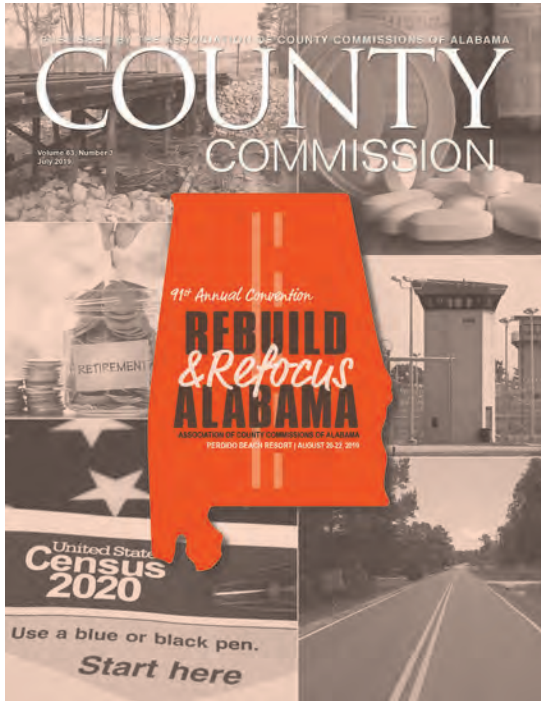


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in this issue

VOLUME 63, NUMBER 3



County officials and employees will converge on the Perdido Beach Resort next month for ACCA's 91st Annual Convention, centered on the theme "Rebuild & Refocus Alabama." Participants will be better equipped to execute Rebuild Alabama Act projects, make a decision on improved retirement benefits for county employees, respond to the opioid crisis at the local level, maximize participation in the 2020 Census and advocate effectively for counties in the state's prison reform discussion.

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President's PERSPECTIVE



Hon. Tony Cherry
President

Tony L. Cherry

Reflecting on a Historic Year

We Must Build upon Successes to Meet the Challenges Ahead

I'm not sure if you remember my remarks at our convention a year ago when you honored me with the opportunity to be president at what I believe will be remembered as a historic year in our Association's history.

On that night, I posed a challenge to each of you. Now, as my time as president is quickly coming to an end, challenges remain for all of us and for this organization — if you will, I ask that you join me in a continuing commitment to make our state an even better place.

It's been an incredible honor and privilege to serve as your president this year, a year that's quickly coming to an end. I can honestly say the year has flown by, as many past presidents promised me it would.

Over the past 12 months, we've celebrated 90 years of Alabama counties working together, and we've welcomed 64 newly elected commission members into the County Family. Our Association office moved — one door down and seven stories up from our longtime home — into quarters that better enable our membership and staff to carry out the vital work of ONE Voice. We also launched County Risk Services Inc. to handle the day-to-day administration of our successful insurance programs.

And as if the year couldn't get any more exciting for our 67 Counties, the Legislature passed and Gov. Kay Ivey signed into law seven of our policy priorities, including the Rebuild Alabama Act — which is the first

new, recurring revenue for county infrastructure in nearly 30 years.

Without a doubt, I'm proud of what we've accomplished. But at the same time, I'm humbled after witnessing how 90 years of counties working together, combined with the extraordinary efforts of the past 12 months, have set into motion a better future for decades to come in all 67 counties.

Perhaps the most meaningful part of being president of this organization is the opportunity it provides to represent each of you. To stand in Montgomery and say I am here on behalf of the men and women in every county commission in Alabama has been an honor beyond words. Those days will remain some of the most rewarding opportunities of my public service career.

During this year, I have also been struck by the influence and credibility of this organization. The ability of Alabama counties to speak with ONE Voice in such an influential way is the result of work and commitment from those who have stood in our shoes over the past 90 years. Continuing — and even expanding upon — that record of achievement rests on our individual commitment to work in a unified manner.

Last August, we honored four former Association presidents that night who were leaving office, and I challenged everyone to find their own place of service to fill the void being left by their departures. You may not remember my exact words, but I do.

And I have held on to those words for the past 12 months.

After one of the most incredible years of my life, my hope for each of you is that you will be re-energized by our successes and that you will be more dedicated to ensuring that we do not give up one inch of what has been accomplished.

As we gather for the 91st Convention next month, it's my hope that we will stay humble. I'm as proud of our wins as anybody, but there are other issues and dangers just over the horizon. If I ride off into that sunset, put my feet up on my desk and rest — the accomplishments of this year will soon be lost.

We've got to turn the Rebuild Alabama Act from a piece of paper into resurfaced roads and new bridges,



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and we've got to show taxpayers that their money is well spent.

Clearly, our state's prison crisis touches every county budget in Alabama. The 2015 sentencing reforms have proven a heavy burden, with rising numbers of state inmates crowding county jails. The prison reforms on the horizon could make our situation at the local level even worse if the state's responsibilities are further shifted onto counties.

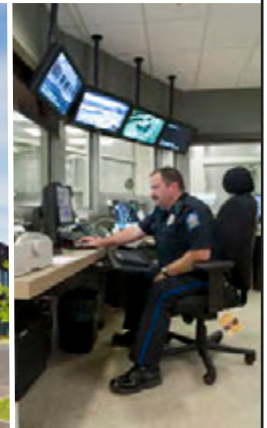
And there are many other issues that my friend David Money will

confront during his year as president of this remarkable organization.

I'm grateful that I have witnessed what counties can do when we speak with ONE Voice, and I'm grateful to know that we are capable of even more. Thank you for putting your trust in me.

I will leave you with the words that began our journey together last August.

There is certainly enough unfinished work to go around. If we are to have complete success, it will take all of us. ■



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Sonny Brasfield
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Sonny Brasfield".

State Prison Gains Have Been Expensive Losses for Counties

No New Revenue Provided at the Local Level

Near the end of the 2019 Regular Legislative Session, leaders from both the House and Senate held a press conference to discuss the state's prison crisis. We stood in the back of the room and listened carefully.

The event was held to reassure those in the U.S. Justice Department that Alabama is focused on addressing problems related to overcrowding, underfunding, prisoner safety and other matters. Alabama's counties face all of those problems, as well.

Much of the discussion returned to a comprehensive piece of legislation passed during the 2015 session, one that legislative leaders credit with reducing the prisoner population inside the Alabama Department of Corrections by about 4,000 inmates. From a purely state perspective, perhaps the legislation has been a success.

The overriding message we heard at that event was something like this — the 2015 legislation has produced successes, and we're asking Gov. Kay Ivey to call a special session so we can make additional changes. We deflected reporters' questions for comments and responses that day. But this is not a subject on which counties — or sheriffs — can remain silent.

Here's a quick snapshot.

The 2015 legislation called for a stronger reliance on probation and parole, providing additional revenue to state agencies for the hiring of more probation and parole officers and encouraging the use of community-based programs as an alternative to state incarceration. The new process relies on what was

designed to be short stays in county jails as punishment for violators who would have previously been returned to state prison. Back in 2015, we pushed for funding to reimburse counties for these new costs, but no new revenue was provided.

The use of community-based programs — such as community corrections, drug courts and other programs — would be encouraged as an alternative to state incarceration. Back in 2015, we pushed for funding to reimburse counties for these new costs, but no new revenue was provided.

The law created a new Class D felony for certain property crimes and provided that those convicted could only serve their time in county jails — rather than inside state prison facilities. Back in 2015, we pushed for funding to reimburse counties for these new costs, but no new revenue was provided.

Experts from around the county testified that such legislation had reduced state prisoner populations in other jurisdictions — which no one disputed. But in states hailed as the model of success, such as North Carolina, the state provided money to reimburse the local governments for the new costs being passed down through the legislative reforms. Back in 2015, we pushed for funding to reimburse counties for these new costs, but no new revenue was provided.

The Association's message at that time was one of partnership with the state and a willingness to assist — but not to be a substitute for — the state's responsibility to house, feed and provide care for state inmates. Once the reforms

were given an opportunity to operate, we were assured that changes would be made to relieve any unintended consequences.

With that background, you can understand why the Association left the press conference with a clear mission to collect data to paint a clear picture of the impact the 2015 reforms are having on county jails.

Here are a few quick facts.

Clearly, the legislative changes have been a step forward for the Alabama Department of Corrections. The in-house population of inmates has been reduced by 17.5% from the effective date of the new law through April of 2019.

During that same time, population in the community corrections programs around the state has remained virtually unchanged. There were 3,642 people housed in community corrections in 2014 and 3,597 in

fiscal year 2018.

The population of state inmates in county jails — those people who have been sentenced to state custody but are just sitting in county jails waiting transport — has steadily increased since 2014.

For example, in fiscal year 2015, there were 1,877 state inmates in county jails, and during fiscal year 2018, the number rose to 2,263 — an increase of more than 20%. And through the first six months of fiscal year 2019, we are on pace to see more than 4,000 state inmates in county jails. That kind of increase has produced millions of dollars in new costs for counties.

In addition, in the past 30 months alone, figures from the Alabama Department of Corrections show that on more than 6,800 occasions, people have entered county jails for violating probation or parole. All of these

people were being returned to state custody before the 2015 reforms, and their care is now being funded by counties.

Data available on the website of the Alabama Department of Corrections makes it clear — counties are absorbing much of the costs of the improvements being made at the state level. The Association is gathering more data — specific numbers on the actual costs absorbed by counties since 2015 — which will be released early this fall. At the Annual Convention, we will discuss this issue in depth.

If there is a special session on this topic or if legislation is introduced in the 2020 Regular Session, we will continue our efforts to be partners with the state. But it is clear to us that a solution for the crisis ballooning inside the 67 county jails must also be a priority. ■

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Refocus: Each County's Role in Combatting the Opioid Crisis

Q AND A



Walsh

Editor's Note: Earlier this year, the National Association of Counties (NACo) and the Appalachian Regional Commission published a report, "Opioids in Appalachia: The Role of Counties in Reversing a Regional Epidemic." Opioids are a hot topic among Alabama county leaders, and ACCA is proud to welcome a NACo expert to the convention's Opening General Session. To help set the stage, County Commission Magazine interviewed Nastassia Walsh, associate program director for justice at NACo.

HOW SEVERE IS ALABAMA'S OPIOID CRISIS?

Across the nation, communities are suffering from rampant opioid misuse and overdose rates, and Alabama is no exception. Although the overall opioid overdose death rate for Alabama has remained below that of other counties across the country, the state experienced a 1,041% increase in opioid deaths from 1999 to 2017. Likely contributing to this increase is the fact that Alabama counties' opioid prescription rates have remained consistently higher than both Appalachian and non-Appalachian counties from 2006 through 2017.

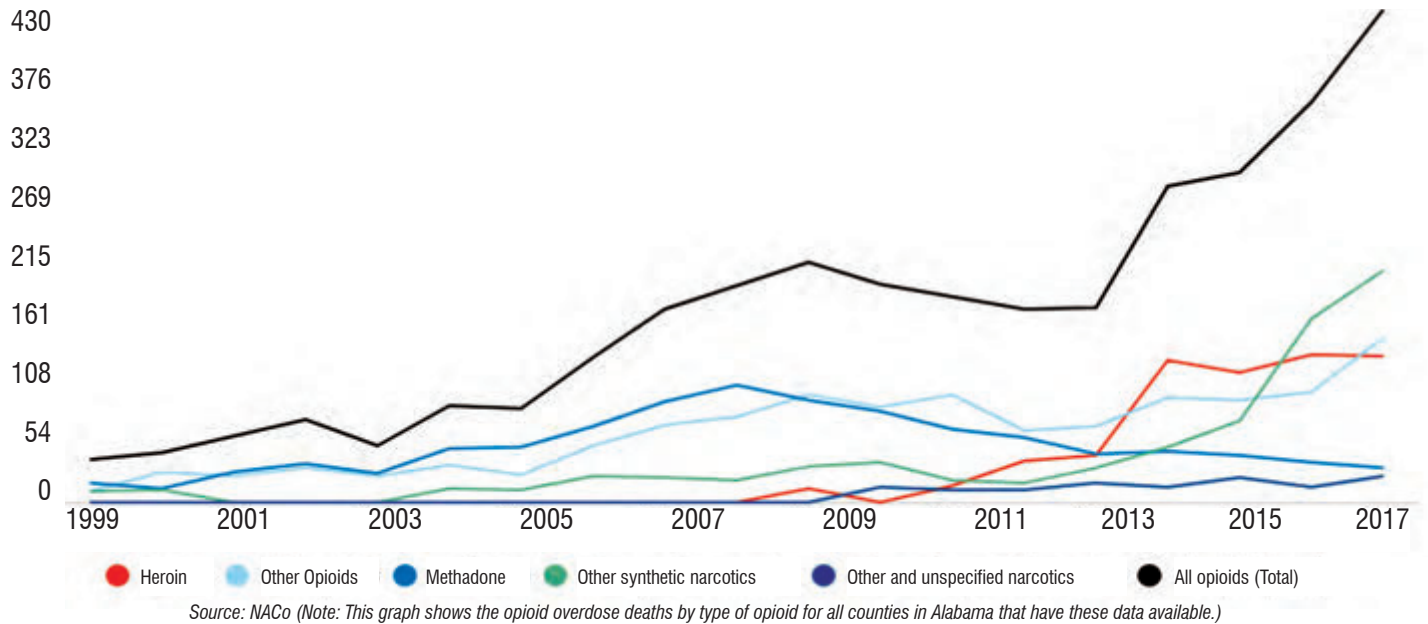
Following various national efforts implemented around 2010 by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, American Pain Society and others to reduce opioid prescription rates, these rates decreased by roughly 30% nationwide and 25% in Alabama from 2012 to 2017. As access to legal forms of the drug became more difficult, however, the demand for opioids continued to grow and shifted to more potent, illegal opioids, such as heroin, fentanyl and other synthetic substances.

WHY IS THIS A PROBLEM THAT NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED AT THE COUNTY LEVEL?

County governments are on the frontlines of efforts to reverse the opioid epidemic — funding justice, health, human services, economic development and other critical local services. As rates of opioid overdoses and deaths have increased, significant strain has been placed on county budgets and services. Among other expenditures, Alabama counties invested more than \$619 million in services for justice and public safety, nearly \$165 million in health and hospitals, more than \$24 million in public welfare, and nearly \$12 million in housing and community development programs in 2012. All of these costs have increased as a result of opioid misuse.

County officials are leaders in the community and are well-positioned to lead the effort against opioid misuse. They have authority and legitimacy from holding public office, and they have empathy and trust from daily community involvement. County leaders can also leverage relationships with businesses, community organizations and other governments to expand the network of resources available and help abate the opioid epidemic. County leaders are in a key position to pull local stakeholders — such as county agencies that help address the opioid epidemic (e.g., law enforcement and social services), community and business leaders or nonprofits and faith-based organizations — together to form Opioid Task Forces or other committees to address this issue.

Total Opioid Overdose Deaths by Type of Opioid in Alabama, 1999-2017



These groups foster community collaboration and can help with securing resources and coordinating services.

WHAT DATA IS ESSENTIAL FOR UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM IN A PARTICULAR COUNTY?

Each county across the country faces its own unique challenges. It is important for county leaders to examine the details of the opioid crisis in the communities they serve, as well as to identify the socioeconomic factors that are allowing this crisis to spread more easily. County leaders can examine opioid prescription rates in their county using data from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Opioid Prescribing Rate Maps. They can work with local health and law enforcement agencies to identify specific neighborhoods and areas that have higher levels of drug activity, then target suppliers in that area. Counties can also use data

from the CDC's WONDER Online Database to identify the number of opioid overdose deaths in the county and the type of substance that is causing the most overdose deaths.

As for the socioeconomic factors, NACo's County Explorer (<http://Explorer.NACo.org>) has county-by-county data to analyze income levels, education levels, labor force growth, health and other indicators that can help county leaders better understand how to curb the epidemic. And finally, the Alabama Department of Public Health is involved in a Data Driven Prevention Initiative around opioid abuse. More details can be found at www.alabamapublichealth.gov/pharmacy/ddpi.html.

THE REPORT RECOMMENDS A TONE OF COMPASSION IN LOCAL CONVERSATIONS ABOUT OPIOIDS. WHY IS THAT IMPORTANT?

In many communities, the stigma associated with addiction encourages silence, often for fear of punishment. Such fear can prevent people from seeking help for their addiction, and the stigma can derail efforts to place treatment and services in areas of the community where people most need them. County leaders can break the silence, set a tone of compassion and encourage solution-oriented discourse.

On the justice side, the incarceration of people who are addicted to opioids has created a situation where many jails — most of them operated by counties — become de facto detoxification centers. Nationally, 63% of sentenced jail inmates have a substance abuse disorder. Local law enforcement and corrections officials play a key role in not only disrupting the supply chain of illicit opioids but also helping individuals begin the recovery process. Often, an encounter with law enforcement or a jail booking is the first time a person is identified as having an addiction. County

officials have the opportunity to make a positive impact on people with opioid use disorders through recovery services both before and after they become involved in the justice system — through law enforcement diversion efforts, in court, in jail and upon release.

HOW CAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES HELP ADDRESS THE OPIOID CRISIS?

The economic impacts of the opioid epidemic have been tremendous. One report showed that between 1999 and 2015, opioids reduced labor force participation by 2 million workers, yielding a cumulative loss of \$1.6 trillion to the U.S. economy. Whether the correlation between decreases

in the labor force and increases in opioid overdose deaths are causal or coincidental is still unclear; nevertheless, economic hardship is one factor that is contributing to the spread of the opioid epidemic.

County leaders must consider the importance of economic and workforce development in conjunction with recovery services to alleviate the effects of the economic downturn happening alongside

the opioid crisis and prevent the continued spread of opioid misuse. In some counties, opioid misuse is so prevalent that businesses are unable to find workers who can pass a drug test. County leaders can develop programs to help connect individuals in recovery to jobs and job training, as well as help businesses learn to work with these individuals, to spur economic development and fill gaps in the workforce. ■

Refocus: Resolving the Nationwide Opioid Crisis

Opening General Session
8:30 a.m. | Wednesday, Aug. 21



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Prison Crisis Spills Over into County Jails

Alabama's last wave of criminal justice reforms saddled county jails with a growing population and millions of dollars a year in new costs. And now, under pressure from the U.S. Department of Justice, legislators are contemplating further reforms to address the state's dangerous, overcrowded and understaffed prison system.

"The state's prison crisis is spilling over into county jails all over the state," said Sonny Brasfield, ACCA Executive Director. "Clearly, this is the next major policy issue for us to confront with One Voice in the coming months."

Legislative leaders have asked Gov. Kay Ivey to call a special session on prison reform, possibly as late as January 2020.

Like so many correctional facilities in the United States, Alabama's county jails are struggling to manage a population where people are far more likely to struggle with substance abuse and/or have serious mental health problems. And here, the population in county jails is artificially inflated by two groups of inmates that properly belong under a state roof.

The first of these groups is quantifiable – these are individuals, convicted and sentenced, who are overdue for transfer to a state facility. By court order, the state has 30 days after receiving an individual's transcript to accept them. A weekly report from the Department of Corrections in late June revealed that there were 266 extra people in county jails because the state had not

made room for them, a number only expected to grow.

Data is not readily available on the second group in county custody that properly belongs in state custody. The 2015 reforms created a process called a "dunk" in which parole violators must spend 45 days back in a state facility before their parole can be revoked. A county jail is the first stop for a parole violator that has been picked up, who then must be transferred to DOC.

"The 'dunks' who are awaiting transfer are in addition to the 266 past the 30-day transfer deadline," Brasfield said.

Legislative Q&A

State-level reforms have put county jails in a bind, and legislators have more big decisions ahead that will shape county jails and county budgets to a

large degree. Recognizing the importance of the county voice in the legislative process, ACCA has organized a question-and-answer session so county officials and advocates can raise their concerns with legislative and state leaders.

Addressing Jail Issues at the County Level

Amid these difficult circumstances, Alabama counties are making headway with some of the most difficult jail issues, and a segment of the convention's Opening General Session will be devoted to these success stories. Local leaders from Chilton, Shelby and St. Clair counties will outline how they instituted enhanced behavioral health programs and developed specialized courts for drug cases, veterans and the mentally ill. ■



Alabama County Criminal Justice Survey

County advocates needed data on county roads and bridges to make the case for an infrastructure investment, and facts and figures will be critically important again in the upcoming discussions surrounding prison reform.

To that end, ACCA and the Association of County Administrators of Alabama developed the Alabama County Criminal Justice Survey to collect information about:

- county jail budgets
- sheriff's department budgets
- community corrections programs

“Refocus: Resolving The Nationwide Opioid Crisis”

- Nastassia Walsh, Associate Program Director, National Association of Counties

“Refocus: Best Practices for Addressing Mounting Jail Issues”

- Hon. Lyle Harmon, District Attorney, 30th Judicial Circuit
- Hon. Bill Weathington, Circuit Judge, 30th Judicial Circuit
- Hon. William Bostick, Circuit Judge, 18th Judicial Circuit
- Richard Fallin, Executive Director, Chilton Shelby Mental Health
- Alex Dudchock, County Manager, Shelby County, & President, Chilton Shelby Mental Health Board

“Refocus: Q&A on Prison Reform”

- Jeff Dunn, Commissioner, Alabama Department of Corrections
- Hon. Chris England, District 70, Alabama House of Representatives
- Hon. Jim Hill, District 50, Alabama House of Representatives

Opening General Session | 8:30 a.m. | Wednesday, Aug. 21

“Opioid & Mental Health Crises in Alabama’s Jails”

- Nastassia Walsh, Associate Program Director, National Association of Counties

Educational Breakout Session for Sheriffs | 3:15 p.m. | Wednesday, Aug. 21

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Refocus: Optional Retirement Changes Ahead

The governor's signature had barely dried on the page when questions started pouring in about ACCA's priority legislation affecting retirement benefits, now Act 2019-132. The intense interest is no surprise, since the law makes it possible for counties to offer more attractive benefits to existing employees.

The law, which has been in effect since May, set out a 24-month implementation period. The Retirement Systems of Alabama's Bill Kelley will address the County Family on Wednesday, Aug. 21, to provide details about the implementation timeline and cost

estimates that will be available to help each commission make an informed decision. Kelley will also take questions from the audience.

In counties participating in RSA's Employees' Retirement System, employees hired prior to 2013 are eligible for the more attractive Tier I benefits, but

employees hired later are in the Tier II category. In a competitive job market, enhanced retirement benefits are expected to help counties retain and recruit talented employees.

It should be noted that no immediate decisions are needed that would affect county budgets for the 2019-2020 fiscal year. ■

Refocus: Implementing Counties' New, Attractive Retirement Option

Bill Kelley, Director of Benefits, Retirement Systems of Alabama

Afternoon General Session

1:30 p.m. | Wednesday, Aug. 21



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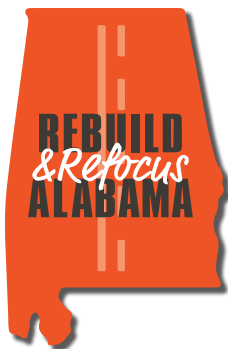
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Association of County Commissions of Alabama

91st Annual Convention

Perdido Beach Resort, Orange Beach, Alabama

TUESDAY, AUGUST 20

- 9:30 a.m.** ACEA Membership Meeting
- 11:00 a.m.** Registration Desk Opens
- 11:00 a.m.** Registration Hall Opens
- 11:00 a.m.** ACCA Board of Directors Meeting
- Noon** Strolling Lunch Inside Exhibit Hall
- 1:00 p.m.** ACAA Membership Meeting
- 1:00 p.m.** Nominating Committee Meeting
- 1:00 p.m.** CROAA Education Session
- 2:00 p.m.** ACCA Workers' Compensation & Liability Insurance Funds Meeting
- 3:00 p.m.** Resolutions Committee Meeting
- 3:15 p.m.** Minority Issues Steering Committee Meeting
- 4:00 p.m.** AAND Membership Meeting
- 4:00 p.m.** AAEM Membership Meeting
- 5:00 p.m.** Opening Reception Inside Exhibit Hall

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 21

- 7:30 a.m.** Convention Breakfast
- 8:00 a.m.** Registration Desk Open
- 8:30 a.m.** Opening General Session
 - Refocus: Resolving the Nationwide Opioid Crisis
 - Refocus: Best Practices for Addressing Mounting Jail Issues
 - Refocus: Q&A on Prison Reform
 - Refocus: Utilizing the 2020 Census Toolkit
- 11:00 a.m.** Sheriffs Breakout

Noon

County Agents Kitchen Lunch

1:30 p.m.

Afternoon General Session

- Rebuild: Passage of the Rebuild Alabama Act
Hon. Kay Ivey, Governor,
State of Alabama
- Refocus: One Sunday in March - Responding to the Devastation of the Lee County Tornadoes
- Refocus: Implementing Counties' New, Attractive Retirement Option
- Refocus: Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act
- Rebuild & Refocus: Report from 2 North Jackson Street

7:00 p.m.

Family Movie Night

THURSDAY, AUGUST 22

- 7:30 a.m.** County Agents Kitchen Breakfast
- 8:30 a.m.** Educational Breakout Sessions
Commissioners, Administrators, Engineers, EMA, 9-1-1 & Revenue
- 11:45 a.m.** Convention Luncheon Honoring President Tony Cherry
- 1:30 p.m.** Afternoon General Session
 - Refocus: Leading When Leading Isn't Easy
- 2:30 p.m.** ACCA Awards Ceremony
- 3:30 p.m.** ACCA Business Session
- 6:30 p.m.** President's Banquet
- 8:30 p.m.** President's Banquet Entertainment

Rebuild: Putting the Rebuild Alabama Act into Motion

Getting the Rebuild Alabama Act successfully through the Legislature and signed into law was no small accomplishment, and pressing forward on successful implementation is requiring more of the “67 Counties, One Voice” work that made it all possible in the first place.

The historic act is the first new, recurring revenue for county roads and bridges since 1992. Funding, which is also benefitting state and municipal infrastructure, comes primarily from a phased-in, 10-cents-per-gallon tax on gasoline

and diesel fuel.

Gov. Kay Ivey, who championed Rebuild Alabama, will address the convention during a general session on Wednesday, Aug. 21. It will be an opportunity to hear her perspective on the achievement and an important moment for counties to express their gratitude for her leadership.

“We take very seriously the commitments we made to the Legislature, the Governor and others,” said Sonny Brasfield, ACCA Executive Director. “We said if they would trust us with this new money,

we would be accountable, open, respectful and consistent.”

ACCA assembled a Rebuild Alabama “Implementation Team” of county engineers to develop policies, procedures and documents needed, including a framework for fulfilling the act’s robust accountability requirements.

At the convention, numerous presentations during the Educational Breakout Sessions on Thursday, Aug. 22, will focus on these practical considerations. Commissioners and Engineers are scheduled for a full morning on Rebuild Alabama, with



“Rebuild: Passage of the Rebuild Alabama Act”

Gov. Kay Ivey

Afternoon General Session | 1:30 p.m. | Wednesday, Aug. 21

Educational Breakout Sessions | 8:30 a.m. | Thursday, Aug. 22

Commissioners & Engineers Breakout

- Rebuild & Refocus: The Challenge Ahead of Us
- Rebuild Alabama Implementation Team Overview & Tasks
- Rebuild Alabama Competitive Bids & Public Work Bids
- Rebuild Alabama Reporting Templates, Timetables & Data Use
- County Rebuild Alabama Bid Guidance
- Rebuild Alabama Implementation Team & ALDOT Interaction
- Rebuild Alabama Grant Opportunities for Local Governments
- Refocusing on “One Voice”

Administrators Breakout

- Implementation of & Accounting for the Rebuild Alabama Act

“Refocus: Leading When Leading Isn’t Easy”

Legislative Panel featuring:

- Hon. Clyde Chambliss, District 30, Alabama Senate (*Senate sponsor of the Rebuild Alabama Act)
- Hon. Chris Elliott, District 32, Alabama Senate
- Hon. Sam Jones, District 71, Alabama House of Representatives

Afternoon General Session | 1:30 p.m. | Thursday, Aug. 22

presentations on the bid process, reporting requirements, interactions with the Alabama Department of Transportation and grant opportunities created by the act.

Policies, procedures and documents developed by county engineers serving on the Implementation Team are being reviewed by the Alabama Department of Examiners of Public Accounts and will be in final form when presented at the convention.

Rebuild Alabama dollars will be handled through a new process, separate from other funding for roads and bridges. For that reason, a portion of the Administrators Breakout on Thursday morning is dedicated to the Rebuild Alabama Act.

Ivey signed the act into law on March 12, and counties have worked with intensity ever since on all the

nuts and bolts necessary to put the act into motion. Brasfield said this part of the work has to be done correctly before the first mile of new asphalt is laid down.

“It is important that we maintain the Legislature’s integrity on what we asked them to vote for, and it is important for us to maintain our credibility,” he said. “There are many reasons why putting this much effort into this process is an enormously positive investment of our time.”

Convention participants will also have a chance to be part of the conversation with legislators on Thursday, Aug. 22. The segment, called “Refocus: Leading When Leading Isn’t Easy,” will use the experience of Rebuild Alabama advocates and the criticism they endured as a jumping off point to talk about real leadership. ■



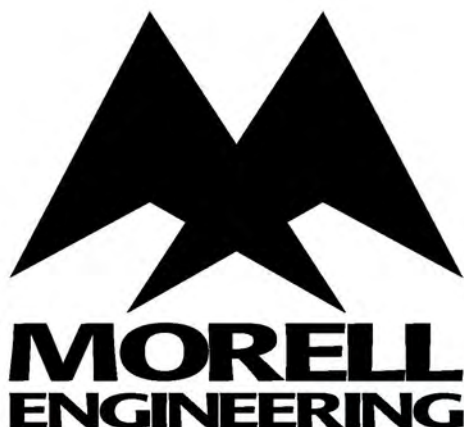
“County Day Battle Awards”

Winners of the County Day Battle will be announced during the Awards Ceremony at the 91st Annual Convention. Roughly 200 county advocates participated in the four County Days at the Legislature this year, and counties (in small, medium and large categories) with the highest participation will be recognized.

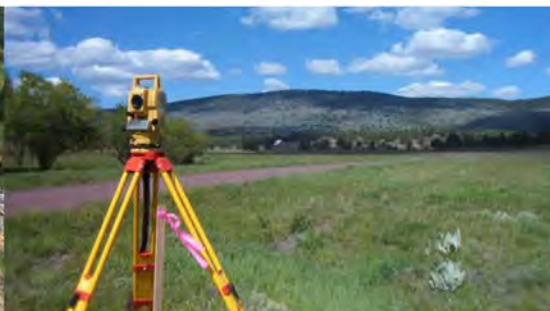
Special awards in additional categories will also be presented.

ACCA Awards Ceremony

3:30 p.m. | Thursday, Aug. 22



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Celebrating 50 Years of the County Agents Kitchen

The 91st Annual Convention, ACCA's biggest gathering of the year, marks a milestone for one of the event's tastiest traditions — the beloved County Agents Kitchen.

Long before fancy restaurants began touting their "farm to table" menus, the County Family was enjoying the best Alabama-grown and -produced foods every year at the Annual Convention, thanks to another association.

"Our members

look forward to the County Agents Kitchen every year, and it is an incredibly generous gift from the

Alabama Association of County Agricultural Agents and Specialists," said Sonny Brasfield, ACCA

Executive Director. "We greatly appreciate the committee members who have kept this special tradition going strong for a half century."

Started in large part to promote agriculture in the state, the event has become the AACAA's premier public relations program. County



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agents fund it themselves, and about 30 volunteers do the hands-on work of serving in the buffet line.

“We enjoy doing it. This is probably one of the most important things we do as an Association,” said AACAAS President Anthony Wiggins, who is based in Escambia County. “It’s all about the importance of those relationships and being in front of the commissioners.”

The tried-and-true menus have become part of the tradition. At lunch, chicken fingers and fried catfish get the starring roles with a bevy of homegrown sides, including sliced tomatoes and fresh watermelon. For dessert, there is ice cream and miniature pecan pies, and tables are decorated with juicy peaches or crisp apples.

Alabama-made hot sauce is a popular item at both meals, and the breakfast offerings include sausage,

bacon, eggs, grits, cantaloupe and tomatoes. However, some years the reality of agriculture affects the menus, since weather and growers’ harvesting cycles play into what produce is available during convention week.

Many years ago, the agents did the cooking themselves, but they now partner with the Perdido Beach Resort.

“It’s amazing it’s made it so long,” said Kevan Tucker, co-chair of the County Agents Kitchen this year. Tucker, who works in Clarke County, said the volunteers sometimes receive thank-you notes or emails from commissioners and their spouses.

Additionally, ACCA’s president and president-elect receive special gifts during the opening general session, when their AACAAS counterparts present them with hams that were smoked and cured in the state. ■



**County Agents
Kitchen Lunch
Noon
Wednesday,
Aug. 21**

**County Agents
Kitchen Breakfast
7:30 a.m.
Thursday, Aug. 22**

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Building on Success: New Leadership for 2019-2020

In the life of the Association, each year builds up to a combined Election and Inauguration Day, and this year, this eventful day of choosing and transitioning to new leadership falls on Thursday, August 22.

That day's luncheon will be devoted to saluting Choctaw County Commissioner Tony Cherry, who has faithfully served as Association president for the 2018-2019 year, and he will be recognized for his distinguished service to all 67 counties.

There will also be a Business Session that afternoon, where the Nominating Committee's recommended slate of 2019-2020

officers will be considered. It is expected that Cherry will pass the gavel to President-Elect David Money of Henry County and that Vice President Randy Vest of Morgan County will advance to the office of president-elect. The committee will also recommend someone to serve as vice president and another to carry out the duties of minority director.

Counties will vote on the officers during the Business Session, and



Money

each county will have one vote. Then that evening, Money will present his priorities for the coming year at the President's Banquet.

Money, a retired business owner, has served as Henry County's Commission Chairman and Probate Judge since 2013. He has been an active member of the Association since taking office, serving on the ACCA Board of Directors and Legislative Committee. A member of the Association's PLAN 2020 leadership program, he has completed the Level II commissioner education program through the Alabama Local Government Training Institute. ■

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12 Dedicated Leaders Needed for Board of Directors

More than ever, Alabama's 67 counties need devoted leaders willing to commit themselves to leading county government and this Association, and there is still time to become a candidate for the 2019-2020 ACCA Board of Directors.

The Association is governed by a board of county commission chairs and commissioners from throughout the state, which is divided geographically into 12 districts. Each district is represented by one board member, and these district representatives join the officers (president, president-elect, vice president and minority director) and past presidents still serving on their home county commissions.

Candidates for the 12 district positions must submit a form to the ACCA office no later than Thursday, Aug. 8, to be included on official ballots. The district map and form are available at www.alabamacounties.org/candidates.

At the convention, district representatives will be selected during the ACCA Business Session on Aug. 22. Districts will caucus to make their selection, and results will be announced immediately. Each county has one vote.

Anyone with questions about election procedures is encouraged to contact Beth Sievers, Assistant to the Executive Director, at 334-263-7594 or bsievers@alabamacounties.org.

**Get all the latest information
on ACCA elections at**
www.alabamacounties.org/candidates

District Representatives on the ACCA Board of Directors

- The candidate form and district map are available online. Forms must be returned no later than Aug. 8.
- A regularly updated list of candidates for all 12 board seats is also online.



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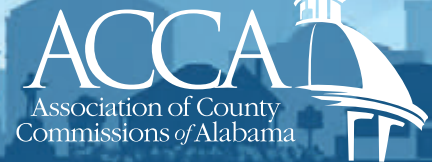
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67 Counties, One Voice

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Immediate Past President, Chair

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Covington | Hon. Kyle Adams

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Franklin | Hon. David Hester

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Greene | Hon. Tennyson Smith

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Henry | Hon. David Money

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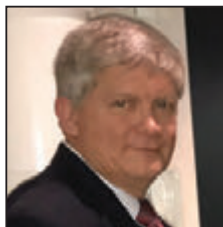
Tuscaloosa | Hon. Jerry Tingle

Walker | Hon. Keith Davis

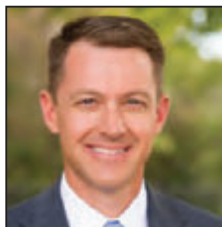
Washington | Hon. Allen Bailey

Wilcox | Hon. John Moton

Winston | Hon. Roger Hayes



Albritton



Allen

County Success on Goat Hill



Beasley



Chambliss

Counties achieved seven of their 2019 Legislative Priorities during the Alabama Legislature's 2019 Regular Session and First Special Session. It was a team effort from county leaders who put "67 Counties, One Voice" into action.



Ellis



Holley

Improving County Infrastructure Through Increased Fuel Taxes

Act 2019-002

Sponsored by Rep. Bill Poole & Sen. Clyde Chambliss

Signed by Gov. Kay Ivey

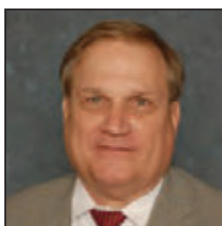
➡ Passed during the first special session of 2019, this new law will increase Alabama's gasoline and diesel fuel taxes by 10 cents per gallon through 2021. The first increase of 6 cents will take place September 1, 2019 — bringing the state's total excise tax on gasoline to \$0.24 per gallon. An additional two cents will be added on October 1, 2020, and again on October 1, 2021. Effective October 1, 2023, the gasoline and undyed diesel excise tax rate will be adjusted by the average annual percentage change in the National Highway Construction Cost Index, with the increase or decrease of the excise tax rate not exceeding \$.01 per gallon.

Counties will receive 25 percent of the new revenue to put strictly toward road and bridge improvements and construction, fund matching, debt payment and joint projects. Under the new law, counties will also be able to save time and stretch their dollars by swapping their federal funds for \$400,000 in state funds — and also participate in a \$10-million local government grant program and a \$30-million to \$50-million, pay-as-you-go ATRIP-II program.

Effective March 12, 2019.



Ledbetter



Melson



Orr



Poole

Utilizing Next-Generation 9-1-1 Technology

Act 2019-070

Sponsored by Sen. Jimmy Holley & Rep. Debbie Wood

Signed by Gov. Kay Ivey

➡ The Alabama Next Generation Emergency Network (ANGEN) is a communication technology system designed to streamline the routing process for 9-1-1 calls, reduce costs for 9-1-1 districts, and improve accuracy and redundancy issues in the current system. While the State 9-1-1 Board has been administering the program since 2013, it now has clear statutory authority to administer ANGEM under this new act. The law further makes a number of technical amendments to the general powers of the Board, enabling it to more effectively provide critical services and support to the state's 9-1-1 districts.

Effective July 1, 2019.



Reynolds



Scott

Offering Better Local Retirement Benefits

Act 2019-132

Sponsored by Sen. Jabo Waggoner & Rep. Nathaniel Ledbetter

Signed by Gov. Kay Ivey

➡ Local government entities participating in the Employees' Retirement System (ERS)



Waggoner



Wood

now have the option to shift their existing Tier II employees to the more attractive benefits package afforded to local employees hired prior to 2013. The law gives local government employers until April 2021 to provide their Tier II members with the plan benefits offered to Tier I employees. Any local governments seeking to provide this additional benefit that did not increase the Tier I member contribution rate as provided for in Act 2011-676 must develop a plan to gradually increase the member contribution rates and submit it to the ERS before electing to provide such benefits. The ERS Board of Control is permitted to deny a local government from exercising the authorization in this act if the local government has a history of non-compliance with ERS requirements or if its financial stability is in question.

This new law will allow local entities to remain competitive in the job market and retain talented employees. It does not impact state revenue and is expected to reduce costs for many counties, cities and local entities. **Effective May 8, 2019.**

Changes to Sheriffs' Feeding Accounts

Act 2019-133

Sponsored by Sen. Arthur Orr & Rep. Rex Reynolds

Signed by Gov. Kay Ivey

➡ The feeding of county inmates has historically been the personal responsibility of the county sheriff due to a long-standing ambiguity in state law that allowed sheriffs to pocket the surplus monies remaining in their feeding fund account. This new law establishes a statewide process to ensure all feeding monies are treated as public funds and to clarify the sheriff is not personally responsible for any shortfall in the feeding account. The law creates a Prisoner Feeding Fund in each sheriff's office and requires feeding monies to be received and disbursed separately from the other office funds. Among other changes, the new law also increases the state's portion of the county inmate feeding allowance from \$1.75 to \$2.25 per prisoner per day. **Effective August 1, 2019.**

Amending the County Debt Set-Off Program

Act 2019-184

Sponsored by Sen. Tim Melson &

Rep. Wes Allen

Signed by Gov. Kay Ivey

➡ Over the past several years, the state's growing rural healthcare crisis has forced many small hospitals to contract their operations over to larger entities. However, the services provided by these "contractor" entities did not meet the technical definition provided in the statute governing the County Debt Set-Off Program, allowing many of the debts owed to rural healthcare providers to go uncollected. The enactment of this technical amendment to the authorizing statute now ensures county healthcare authorities may continue to participate in the program, even if they contract with an outside entity to provide financial or administrative management assistance. **Effective May 15, 2019.**

Reinstating Right-of-Way Waiver Valuations

Act 2019-234

Sponsored by Rep. Corley Ellis & Sen. Billy Beasley

Signed by Gov. Kay Ivey

➡ The Alabama Department of Transportation and county highway departments have traditionally utilized "waiver valuations" to acquire rights-of-way from private landowners, permitting the departments to reach mutual agreements with private landowners on the purchase price for right-of-way acquisitions. The Federal Highway Administration recently advised that Alabama law did not recognize the federal concept of a waiver valuation. This amendment to the statutory provisions now permits the use of waiver valuations if (1) the property owner is donating the property and releases the state or political subdivision from its appraisal obligations or (2) the state or political subdivision, with the written consent of the property owner, determines an appraisal is not necessary and the anticipated property value is equal to or less than the amount in the applicable federal regulation — which is currently \$10,000. With this new law, counties can continue to utilize this process that has saved them much time and money over the years. **Effective May 22, 2019.**

Updating the Simplified Sellers Use Tax Program

Act 2019-382

Sponsored by Rep. Rod Scott & Sens. Greg Albritton & Tim Melson

Signed by Gov. Kay Ivey

➡ The 2018 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in the South Dakota v. Wayfair case established a collection methodology for online sellers that works well with Alabama's Simplified Seller Use Tax (SSUT) program; however, technical issues in the law required amending to guarantee compliance with the Court's ruling. This act amends the law to expand protection from class action lawsuits involving claims for SSUT refunds. It also provides tax amnesty for online sellers for tax periods prior to October 1, 2019, and prohibits the collection of the SSUT on vehicles for which state and local taxes are required to be collected at the time of the vehicle's registration. **Effective June 5, 2019.**

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Photos from Alabama Counties



Improving 9-1-1 Technology

Gov. Kay Ivey's signing ceremony for Act 2019-70 drew Rep. Debbie Wood, the bill's House sponsor; a crowd of emergency communication professionals; and ACCA policy staff members to the Alabama Capitol in early June. The new law clarifies the State 9-1-1 Board's authority to administer the Alabama Next Generation Emergency Network, known as ANGEN.

Photo: Governor's Office

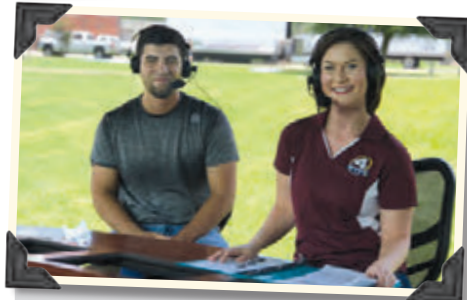


Legislative Advocacy on Goat Hill

Again in 2019, County Days at the Legislature were an important part of the strategy to influence actions at the Alabama Statehouse. Elected officials and county staff leaders went to Montgomery in droves for timely, face-to-face conversations with legislators. At the final 2019 County Days on May 22, advocates received a briefing on the Simplified Sellers Use Tax program before heading to House and Senate offices.



@ALABAMACOUNTIES



Promoting a Community Tradition

On June 21, Geneva County Commissioner Weston Spivey went live on WTVY to promote the Annual Slocomb Tomato Festival. At age 19, Spivey is Alabama's youngest elected official. In fact, he was still in high school when he took the oath of office last year.



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Ensuring the Future of County Government
On June 6, the Boards of Trustees for the ACCA Self-Funded Liability & Workers' Compensation Insurance Funds met in Montgomery to review recent improvements and discuss future service enhancements during what has already been a milestone year for the County Insurance Programs.



@ALABAMACOUNTIES

Rebuilding Alabama
County engineers and leaders from the Alabama Department of Transportation convened in early June for one of many important meetings to work through implementation of the Rebuild Alabama Act.



@SONNYBRASFIELD



Preparing for the Next Disaster
The Alabama Association of Emergency Managers teamed up with the Alabama Emergency Management Agency to present the 2019 Alabama Disaster Preparedness Conference last month, and Gov. Kay Ivey told emergency managers that "failing to plan is planning to fail."

Photo: Governor's Office

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 Fitzpatrick, Director of Communication & Engagement, afitzpatrick@alabamacounties.org.

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Voices from the County Family

Q

Why is it important for everyone in the County Family – especially administrators, engineers, emergency managers, 9-1-1 leaders and revenue officers – to participate in the ACCA Annual Convention?



Matt Sharp

DeKalb County President, Association of County Administrators of Alabama

A In my more than 19 years as a County Administrator, I have found the Annual Convention to be not only a wealth of information but also a valuable tool for connecting with my peers around the state. The convention is an outstanding time to exchange ideas, and our ACCA staff has done a great job preparing an agenda this year with topics that will impact all of our counties. Rebuild and Refocus is the theme, and no matter if you are a new county employee or have 30 years under your belt, you will find the ACCA Convention to be a time to celebrate our legislative victories, work together on smooth implementation and look ahead at upcoming

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challenges. I look forward to seeing all of you in August.

DeAndrae Kimbrough



*Perry County
President,
Association of
County Engineers
of Alabama*

A Have you ever wanted to attend an event with friends and family, where you were guaranteed to have a great experience, both professionally and personally? Did you want the event to promise pertinent information on recent developments in county government; provide you the opportunity to learn from peers with exceptional experience; ensure that you are informed of the most recent laws that passed this year and do it all in a

relaxing atmosphere? If so, you should make every effort to meet the County Family in Orange Beach for the ACCA Annual Convention.

Jim Coker



*Jefferson County
President, Alabama
Association
of Emergency
Managers*

A The role of county government is getting increasingly complex; this is in part due to technology, social media and new challenges that are being faced daily. Everyone in county government needs to be familiar with issues that may touch aspects of many county services; interacting with varying disciplines and elected officials helps to build the relationships needed for success. The ACCA Convention

provides a platform for those attending to learn and discuss solutions for issues while charting a path into the future.

Gordon L. Sandlin



*Cullman County
President, Alabama
Association
of 9-1-1 Districts*

A The ACCA Annual Convention is something I look forward to every year. Not only is it in a great location, but it also offers opportunities to rub shoulders with other county government officials and learn about issues affecting everyone — and not just us in the 9-1-1 world. It's a time when the County Family can come together to learn, share ideas, train and network. I encourage all to attend.

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