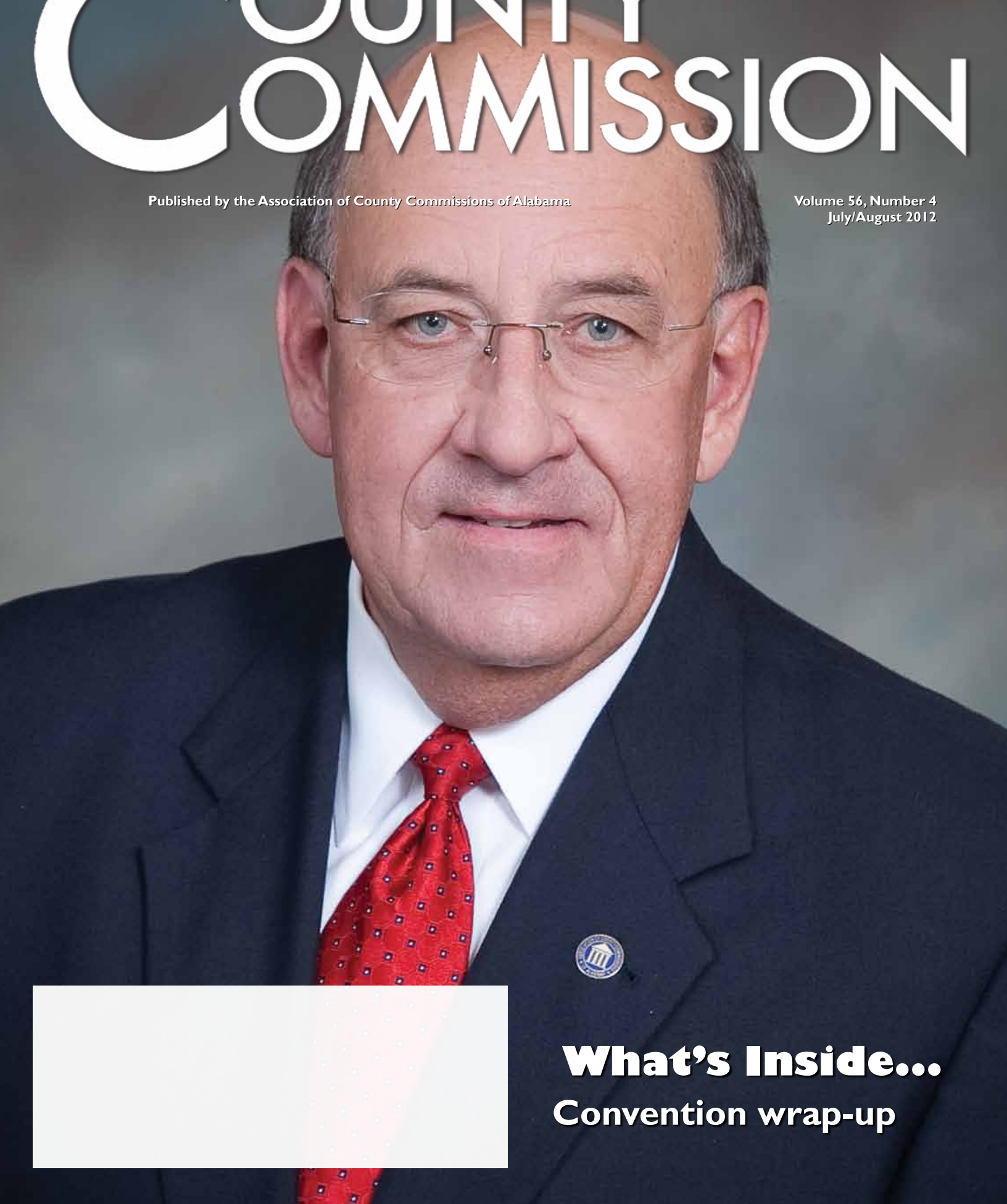


# COUNTY COMMISSION

Published by the Association of County Commissions of Alabama

Volume 56, Number 4  
July/August 2012



**What's Inside...**  
**Convention wrap-up**



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# in this issue

VOLUME 56, NUMBER 4



*DeKalb County Commission President Ricky Harcrow was elected 2012-2013 president of the Association of County Commissions of Alabama during the 84rd Annual Convention in August.*

## from the cover...

ACCA's 'Blueprint for Change' a hit with membership .....	15
Faulkner wins Outstanding Contribution to County Government.....	16
Elected officials honored for years of service .....	18
Marengo County Commission honored for excellence.....	19
Mobile County earns award for new citizens academy.....	21
Alabama Local Government Training Institute honorees.....	22
County Government Education Institute awards certificates .....	25
ACCA liability fund rewards counties for safety .....	29

## news you can use...

Legislative conference sets stage for 2013 session .....	11
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## points of view...

President's Corner.....	4
<i>Education is the key</i>	
The County Line .....	6
<i>Presidents strive to leave legacies</i>	
In Legal Terms .....	8
<i>From one-man pothole patchers to disaster debris removal</i>	

## who we are...

2012-13 ACCA Board of Directors.....	30
ACCA Staff.....	30

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Hon. Ricky Harcrow  
President

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

## Education is the key

Association's professional  
development programs are  
our best tool to make county  
government more effective

*Editor's note: The following is the prepared text of President Harcrow's acceptance speech, given at the 84th Annual Convention.*

Over the years I have had the privilege of serving in a number of elected positions, served on numbers of boards and commissions locally, statewide and some even on a national level. Regardless of how important those may have been to me you all have given me a unique opportunity to serve in a greater way than ever as president of this organization. Working with the staff here over the years and being on the board of directors, I have learned to appreciate the various and sundry issues that each of you have to address in your respective counties. One of the most outstanding things in my own mind is to see how our organization continues to evolve and adjust to new avenues, different circumstances and very different political administrations. Working together with the staff here, the board and you as individual commissioners, we have shown every other organization the importance of solidarity, oneness and constant communication. I shudder to think where we would be today if we did not have a constant presence at the capital in Montgomery. Of course the executive director, legal counsel and all the staff serve the cause well and all are high on the list. But in all truth they are not the ACCA.....you are....You make up the organization. Whether we succeed or fail or whatever the case may be, it is not them, it is ...us. Us has got us where us is. It is easy for us to pass the buck to someone else, so I want in the most effective way that I

can to encourage you individually and collectively to put your shoulder to the wheel in the days to come.

One of the most outstanding programs before us in the coming year is the ATRIP program. It is providing \$1 billion in road and bridge funding for local government over a three-year period. I want to thank our friends, Gov. Robert Bentley and Mr. John Cooper, our highway director, for their willingness to not only listen to the concerns of counties but also to respond to county concerns. This program challenges counties to put together strong proposals and work to meet every deadline and every requirement necessary to bring these projects to completion.

Over the years I personally have been so benefited by our training courses. When I first was elected to office many years ago I had all the right motives, I really think I did, and still do for that matter. But as sincere as my motives may have been, my methods needed some work. I needed to be taught the right method to achieve the goal. Sometimes those methods get misdirected. I was trying so hard to help a neighbor one day. He was struggling with a large refrigerator in his kitchen door and without any solicitation from him or questions for him, I ran to help him. Finally after pulling, straining and tugging, I said "I don't think were going to get it out." He said, "I'm not trying to get it out, I'm trying to get in." Remember that unbridled and misdirected zeal can be dangerous. Now my motive was exactly right but my method was exactly wrong

**These programs will help equip those coming behind us to learn the limits and boundaries we have to live within, to amplify and build on existing fundamental and basic programs already in place and offer you, in every way we can through education, a greater range of knowledge to better equip you as public servants.**

and that's where training comes on the stage.

Our educational programs through Auburn University and the ACCA are so outstanding and provide skills and basic fundamental information that is essential to serving in county government. As many new commissioners as we have being elected and coming into the system, even this year, we have to continually go back to the fundamentals. Sometimes we have to re-evaluate certain things but basics do not change. We will be re-evaluating the orientation courses and other courses provided to new commissioners to ensure their successful transition into the county government family. Ladies and gentlemen, this is vital, and I want to emphasize the word "vital" here; if county government is to improve and become more effective these basics that are taught cannot be abandoned or put on the back burner. That being the case, we will begin this year on a leadership program to enhance the ability of county commissioners and county commissions to respond to the needs of the community and exercise those leadership skills in the most effective way possible. These programs will help equip those coming behind us to learn the limits and boundaries we have to live within, to amplify and build on existing fundamental and basic programs already in place and offer you, in every way we can through education, a greater range of knowledge to better equip you as public

servants. Yesterday, as Mr. Bill Taylor of the Mercedes Company spoke to us, I thought it was ironic that during all his presentation and when he spoke about economic development all over North America, he emphasized education. He spoke about how and why his company had located in Alabama, and he, without hesitation, made it plain that the bottom line to the whole process and usually the continuation of success was education. Education is the key. Training and building on fundamentals is the key.

A number of years ago Dekalb County was a pilot county in working with our high schools in involving high school

students who were interested in public service careers. At the request of our local community college I attended Career Day, an annual event and tried to explain as best I could the pattern of county government. Many of those students attended our meetings and really got a firsthand look at how county governments operate. The similar Mobile County project, which was honored today, is an outstanding way to further educate and generate community involvement in support of county government. As a result of these efforts and others like them, we want to provide counties with a road

*continued on p. 26*



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*Sonny Brasfield*  
*Executive Director*

*Sonny Brasfield*

## Presidents strive to leave legacies

Projects with lasting impact often stretch beyond term of office

On the drive home from the convention, I started thinking about the predictable desire of all ACCA presidents to “do something” during their year in office.

Each one wants to start – and finish – a project during their 12 months. But if the project is to have lasting impact, it can seldom be finished in a single year.

If you remember, a couple of years ago we all laughed during the President’s Luncheon when I outlined the frequent calls from then-ACCA President Larry White of Escambia County. He was fond of calling to ask “what have we accomplished so far?”

Most of the time, we were forced to say, “well, not much...yet.”

Each year in advance of the convention we exchange ideas with the incoming president. This year we met with Ricky Harcrow at a restaurant about half way between his home in DeKalb County and our office in Montgomery. Ricky’s vision for his year as president is detailed in his column in this issue.

So far he hasn’t asked “what have we accomplished?”, but it is still very early in his term, and we’re spending most of our time working on initiatives started by earlier presidents.

We’re helping counties implement a new law that allows them to require advance notice from timber owners who plan to use the county right-of-way or its roads and bridges. In the coming months each county will face its own challenges and the Association will work to help smooth the edges on the necessary implementation policies.

Though this law was passed in 2012, it will be years before this is all sorted out.

Likewise, we’ve almost put the finishing touches on an effort to establish a centralized network of statewide pre-event contracts for the monitoring and removal of storm debris. Shortly after the tornados of April 2011, the Association began work with emergency management directors, engineers and the state Emergency Management Agency to navigate the tangled FEMA requirements so that this statewide approach could become a reality.

Bids have been awarded on the debris removal services, with prices less than half the amounts paid by counties during the aftermath of the 2011 storms – when Clay County’s Ricky Burney was president.

On Oct. 1 the collection point for gasoline taxes in Alabama shifted from the retail level to the refinery point. This change is expected to produce increased road and bridge revenue for counties. Passed in 2011, this long-overdue legislative act was first proposed by ACCA when Bruce Hamrick of Walker County was holding the president’s gavel back in 2005.

Everyone in county government is aware of the massive rewrite of the laws pertaining to the operation and funding of 9-1-1 programs passed by the Legislature in 2012. The idea was first rolled out in the 2011 legislative session – when Burney was president of the Association – but the new statewide 9-1-1 rate won’t be effective until October of 2013, during

## Each one wants to start — and finish — a project during their 12 months. But if the project is to have lasting impact, it can seldom be finished in a single year.

Chambers County Commissioner Debbie Wood's term.

For the second straight year the health insurance premiums paid by those counties participating in the local government fund have remained flat, in major part because of recommendations initiated by an ACCA task force that was part of President's White year as your leader in 2009.

Etowah County Commissioner Tim Choate's presidential term will long be remembered for ACCA's branding program, and I somehow manage to work "67 counties, one voice" into every conversation he and I have to this day. But even that project had roots going back years – to the work of the 2015 Task Force, which began

during Clarke County Commissioner Rhondel Rhone's term as president and continued during Conecuh County Commissioner Jerold Dean's year as president.

During this year's convention, our new president stood before you and outlined his vision for the coming year. Most of his focus is on our education programs, specifically setting the stage for a new leadership program for the Association designed to produce a more energized membership base both back home and inside the Association's boards and committees.

We are excited about the impact this program can have on the Association and on the ability of the participants to translate their skills into better service.

The program will expose participants to greater responsibilities and the opportunity to expand their influence and involvements.

Based on its design parameters, the program cannot begin until January of 2015. By that time, Mobile County Commissioner Merceria Ludgood – not Ricky Harcrow – will be leading the organization.

As you get to know Commissioner Ludgood, you'll see how fitting it is that a leadership program would begin on her watch. When speaking to that first leadership class, she will certainly share the credit with Harcrow, who started an initiative so important that it will transcend his time in office.

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Mary E. Pons  
Association Counsel

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

## From one-man pothole patchers to disaster debris removal

County Joint Bid Program has been saving counties time and money for 12 years

Several years ago, an innovative group of county engineers asked the Association staff to investigate what it would take to establish a program whereby all counties could bid together on certain items such as heavy equipment. The thought was that joined together, counties could receive the best available prices on quality equipment and would be relieved of the administrative responsibilities of separately bidding items.

A few months later, a two-word change in Alabama's competitive bid law passed by the Alabama Legislature allowed for the creation of the Alabama County Joint Bid Program. This program – now in its 12th year – has been a great success and continues to benefit all 67 counties by allowing the purchase of quality heavy equipment, herbicides, and road signs at very competitive prices. The program has grown tremendously, with new items added each year and special bid offerings conducted when warranted, such as the joint bid held several years ago for the new election equipment required under the Help America Vote Act.

In the beginning, many vendors were skeptical about this program. However, it is now viewed as a positive by most vendors since it allows them to market to counties the items awarded to their company without having to submit separate bids for each potential sale.

And the benefits to the county are numerous. Under the program, all items are generally available from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31. This is a tremendous help to counties in developing their annual

budget. Since the prices for items available are already known, counties can better plan for purchases expected to be made during the next fiscal year. Additionally, since each year's bid offering takes place in the fall, the new bid prices are made available to counties in time for them to make purchases before price increases take effect in January of the following year. These prices are generally more competitive than available through separate bidding, because understanding that most counties will want to purchase from the joint bid list whenever possible, vendors work hard to offer the best pricing possible in order to win the bid award for the coming year.

The stability of the program benefits both counties and vendors as well. While in the first few years, there were a few bumps in the road, it is now generally understood how the program works. The bid specifications developed for the program very carefully detail the vendors' responsibilities regarding warranties, delivery and shipping costs, meaning there are very few unknown variables in the process. Both counties and vendors know the expectations and the rules to follow and over the years, this has all but eliminated problems in the purchasing process. Additionally, counties and vendors are secure in knowing that Alabama's competitive bid law has been carefully followed throughout the process – something not always clear with other cooperative bidding programs.

Of course, the Joint Bid Program has not completely eliminated the need for individual bidding by counties. While



## The program has ventured into new territory during the last few months, letting bids for debris removal and monitoring services on a regional basis.

the list of items available is extensive, there are still instances where a county needs or desires an item not available on the joint bid list. However, every effort is made to provide counties with a sufficient variety of equipment, herbicides, and road signs from which to choose. Therefore, counties should make it a practice to check the joint bid list first and bid only when the desired product is not available, since use of the program keeps prices down and saves counties valuable time. Additionally, counties are encouraged to keep Association staff informed about products they would like to see added to the list.

The program has ventured into new territory during the last few months, letting bids for debris removal and monitoring services on a regional basis. This new effort has been strongly supported by the Alabama Emergency Management Agency. The effort is designed to ensure that every county in Alabama will have these services available at a moment's notice following a disaster necessitating clean up in the county. Over the years, many counties have ended up spending more than necessary on these services because decisions had to be made so quickly. And worse, many counties have been "taken" by unscrupulous contractors taking advantage of the desperate situation which occurs in the immediate aftermath of a disaster in the county. Through this bid offering, counties will have an option to select a contractor who has been "vetted" through the joint bid program – one with knowledge and experience in how to perform the services under state and federal

emergency management guidelines. And because these services are available simply by activating a notice to proceed, the county can concentrate on the many other details at play following a disaster and avoid spending precious time deciding how to eliminate debris.

Yes, the County Joint Bid Program has been a great success and it has become an important service provided to counties by the Association. As with everything else, its success is due in large part to the efforts of members working with Association staff to make it happen. That innovative group of engineers mentioned at the outset has now spent 12 years developing and revising bid specifications, consulting with colleagues on what changes to

make, reviewing bids and offering technical assistance to the Association's counsel on just what a one-man pothole patcher does and why the right kind of scarifier is important. But the greatest measure of its success is the fact that the program continues to benefit all counties by providing them with the ability to purchase quality equipment at competitive prices without the administrative burdens of individual bidding.

All great programs have room for improvement and we welcome your comments and suggestions on how to make this one better. Remember that the program exists for the benefit of counties – and all counties should take advantage of it whenever they can.



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**2012 AUCTION SCHEDULE**

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

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

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

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

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



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## Legislative Conference sets stage for 2013 session

The 2012 Legislative Conference is scheduled for December 5 - 6, 2012, at the Renaissance Montgomery Hotel and Convention Center in Montgomery, Ala.

The conference is held in conjunction with the Alabama Association of Emergency Managers Workshop and New Commissioner Orientation provided by the Alabama Local Government Training Institute. Both the workshop and orientation are Dec. 4-5, also at the Renaissance Montgomery.

At the Legislative Conference, each year the Association's membership meets to discuss the upcoming Legislative session and approve the Legislative Program that will guide activities during the session. It is important that each county is represented at the conference to have input into the Legislative Program.

Development of the program started with subject matter steering committees, which began meeting in September to review the 2012 program and develop new positions and priorities. Their recommendations are forwarded to the Legislative Committee, which makes a recommendation to the ACCA Board of Directors. After the board endorses the program, it is presented to the full Association membership.

Several important topics will be covered during the conference's opening general session. David Bronner, CEO of the Retirement Systems of Alabama, will speak on the future of Alabama's



*The Alabama Legislature will return to the State House for the 2013 Regular Session on Feb. 5, 2013.*

economy. In addition, Attorney General Luther Strange has been invited to speak on open meetings, and other parts of the program will touch

on constitutional reform, workers compensation reform and of course talk extensively about the upcoming legislative session. Also invited is House Speaker Mike Hubbard, who would give his thoughts on the 2013 session.

Custom-tailored breakout sessions are scheduled for county commissioners, administrators, engineers, 9-1-1 directors, emergency managers and revenue officers.

Online registration is available at this link: [www.alabamacounties.org/?p=1595](http://www.alabamacounties.org/?p=1595).

The deadline for the reduced registration price of \$125 is Nov. 21. After Nov. 21, the registration fee will be \$150. Registration cancellations made after Nov. 26, will not be refunded. Registration fees must be paid by credit card or PayPal account at the time of registration.

Questions about the conference may be directed to Donna Key at the ACCA office, 334-263-7594 or [dkey@alabamacounties.org](mailto:dkey@alabamacounties.org).



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# News You Can Use

## 2012 Legislative Conference Agenda

Association of County Commissions of Alabama, December 5 - 6, 2012

Renaissance Montgomery Hotel and Convention Center, Montgomery, Ala.

### Tuesday, December 4

10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

New Commissioner Orientation

9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

AAEM Workshop

### Wednesday, December 5

8 a.m. - Noon

New Commissioner Orientation

8 a.m. - Noon

AAEM Workshop

10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

ACCA Legislative Conference Registration

10:30 a.m. - Noon

ACCA Board of Directors Meeting

1:30 - 5 p.m.

Opening General Session

Hon. Ricky Harcrow, ACCA President, presiding

- Future of Alabama's Economy, *Dr. David*

*Bronner, CEO, Retirement Systems of Alabama*

- Enforcement of Alabama's Open Meetings Law, *Luther Strange, Attorney General, State of Alabama (Invited)*
- Constitutional Revision Commission, *Rep. Patricia Todd, Alabama House of Representatives*
- Preview of the 2013 Legislative Session, *Rep. Mike Hubbard, Speaker, Alabama House of Representatives (Invited)*
- Long-Term Financial Plan for the State's General Fund, *Dr. Marquita Davis, Director, Alabama Finance Department*
- Workers Compensation Reform, *Jeff Blacett, Auburn Montgomery Center for Governmental Services*

5 - 6 p.m.

Opening Reception

Dinner on your own.

### Thursday, December 6

7:30 - 10 a.m.

Legislative Conference Registration

8 - 9:15 a.m.

Breakfast and 2013 Legislative Session

Briefing

(ACCA Legislative Program and Priority Legislation)

*Hon. Merceria Ludgood, ACCA Second*

*Vice President, presiding*

*Sonny Brasfield, ACCA Executive Director*

9:30 - 10 a.m.

Combined Breakout Session for Commissioners, Engineers, Administrators and AAEM

- Activation of Debris Contracts, *Mary Pons, ACCA Association Counsel*

10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Commissioners Breakout Session

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# News You Can Use

Hon. Merceria Ludgood, ACCA Second Vice President, presiding

- **What Happens When You Blame the Legislature**
- **The ABCs of ABC**, Mac Gipson, Director, Alabama Alcohol Beverage Control Board (Invited)
- **Task Force to Prevent Child Hunger in Alabama**, ACCA President Ricky Harcrow

10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Engineers Breakout Session

Chris Champion, ACEA President, presiding

- **Regulating Gravel Pits**, Jeff Kitchens, Chief, Stormwater Management Branch, ADEM
- **Update on ATRIP Program**, Ed Austin, ALDOT
- **Logging Notification: So Far So Good?**, David Bufkin, Autauga County Engineer and John Bedford, Colbert County Engineer

10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Administrators Breakout Session

Diane Kilpatrick, ACAA President, presiding

- **Use of County Credit Card Legislation**, ACCA Staff
- **ONE SPOT Single Point Sales Tax Filing (Combined with CROAA)**, Curtis Stewart, ADOR

10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

AAEM Breakout Session

Mike Evans, AAEM President, presiding

- **Communication Between State and Local Officials in Regards to Evacuations**, Art Faulkner, AEMA
- **Education Requirements for CLEM**, Mike Evans, AAEM President
- **AAEM President's Update**, Mike Evans, AAEM President

9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

AAND Breakout Session

Bill Richvalsky, AAND President, presiding

- **Workers Comp Coverage for 911 Districts Through the ACCA Fund**, Sonny Brasfield, ACCA Executive Director
- **Report from the Alabama Wireless 9-1-1 Board**, Roger Wilson, Chairman

- **Progress Report on the Statewide Study**, Matthew Duke, Senior Director, Auburn Montgomery Center for Government

9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

CROAA Breakout Session

Terri Henderson, CROAA President, presiding

- **Business License Reform**, Jason Isbell, Chief Counsel, Office of Speaker Mike Hubbard (Invited)
- **New Local Nexus Rule**, Joe Garrett, ADOR (Invited)
- **One Spot Single Point Sales Tax Filing (Combined with Administrators)**, Curtis Stewart, ADOR

11:30 a.m. - Noon

ACCA Business Session

Hon. Ricky Harcrow, ACCA President, presiding

Noon

Adjourn



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## From the Cover

# ACCA's 'Blueprint for Change' hit with membership

For three days in August, county leaders from across the state networked and learned together at the ACCA 84th Annual Convention.

Organized around the theme, "Blueprint for Change," the conference boasted an impressive line-up of speakers and presenters. Gov. Robert Bentley led the agenda with his speech to a packed house – even at the early hour of 8:45 a.m. Bentley was not the only official elected statewide to grace the agenda; he was followed by state Treasurer Young Boozer.

But county leaders heard from others representing the Bentley administration too. The convention included presentations from Mental



**Gov. Robert Bentley**

Health Commissioner Jim Reddoch, Emergency Management Agency Director Art Faulkner, Revenue Commissioner Julie Magee and Transportation Director John Cooper.

"The feedback from county officials and staff members who attended the 2012 convention was extraordinarily positive," said ACCA Executive Director Sonny Brasfield. "The willingness of high-profile speakers to join us underscores the importance of county government."

The convention ended on a high note, with new president, DeKalb County Commission President Ricky Harcrow, saying he will devote his energies to the Association's education programs. "Education is the key," he said, and you can read the prepared text of his remarks, beginning on page 4.



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## From the Cover

### Faulkner wins Outstanding Contribution to County Government

Alabama Emergency Management Agency Director Art Faulkner has received the Association of County Commissions of Alabama's 2012 award for Outstanding Contribution to County Government in recognition of his significant contributions of time, talent and energy toward the benefit of Alabama's county governments.

Faulkner has 23 years of experience working in state and local government. In 2011, Gov. Robert Bentley appointed him to head Alabama EMA, the state's coordinating agency for disaster preparedness, response and recovery.

"I shudder to think of the aftermath of the April 2011 tornadoes without Art Faulkner," said Sonny Brasfield, executive director of ACCA. "The state agency's response reflected his vision of support for local government, and he was on the ground with many of our county leaders to ensure that we



*ACCA 2011-2012 President Tim Choate (right), a commissioner in Etowah County, presented the award for Outstanding Contribution to County Government to Art Faulkner, director of the Alabama Emergency Management Agency.*

had the resources and assistance we needed to care for our citizens."

During his career, Faulkner has also served as the director of the Alabama Department of Homeland Security, the police chief of Coosada, Elmore County's 9-1-1 director and assistant

EMA director and acting director of operations for Alabama EMA.

"While Art worked at the Department of Homeland Security, he was a consistent advocate for role of county government and local use of federal funds available after the attacks of 9/11," Brasfield said.

Faulkner was originally appointed state 9-1-1 coordinator by Gov. Bob Riley, and he continues in that role today. He has played a major role in the enactment of reform laws that have placed Alabama at the forefront of emergency communication. One of these laws prohibits the release of audio recordings of 9-1-1 calls and another establishes a flat statewide fee for all types of phones that access 9-1-1. The new fee is designed to ensure the long-term financial future of emergency communications in Alabama.

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# From the Cover

## Previous honorees for Outstanding Contribution to County Government

### 2011

W. Hardy McCollum  
Probate Judge and Commission  
Chairman, Tuscaloosa County

### 2010

State Rep. Bill Dukes  
Chairman, House County and  
Municipal Government Committee

### 2009

Ken Joiner  
Administrator, Calhoun County

### 2008

James "Pappy" Dunn  
Commissioner, Calhoun County

### 2007

W.F. "Bill" Joseph Jr.  
Former chairman, Montgomery  
County Commission

### 2006

Johnny Hassett  
Meadowbrook Insurance Group

### 2005

State Rep. Jack Venable  
Chairman, House Rules Committee

### 2004

Mike Scroggins  
Director of county audits, Alabama  
Department of Examiners of Public  
Accounts

### 2003

Frank Courson  
Alabama Department of  
Transportation

### 2002

Buddy Sharpless  
Executive director, ACCA

He is past president of the Alabama chapter of the National Emergency Number Association and was the inaugural president of the Alabama Association of 9-1-1 Districts.

Faulkner is a resident of Elmore, where he serves as vice chairman of the Elmore Water Authority and the Elmore County Enhanced 9-1-1 District.

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## From the Cover

### Elected officials honored for years of service

The following elected county officials – whether commissioners, chairmen/presidents or chairmen/probate judges – were recognized at ACCA's 84th Annual Convention for their long tenure in office.

#### 16 Years

Tom Grimsley, Coffee County; David Bodiford and Wendell Byrd, Conecuh County; Bragg Carter, Covington County; and Reginald Murray and Gary Youngblood, Tuscaloosa County.

#### 20 Years

Jerome Chism, Bibb County; Wayne White, Chambers County; Rhondel Rhone, Clarke County; Bernest Brooks, Coffee County; Earl Reeves, Elmore County; David Stokes, Escambia County; Gerald Barksdale, Limestone County; and Ray Goodson and Charlie Harris, Pike County.

#### 24 Years

Hugh Barrow and Leonard Millender, Conecuh County; Albert Daniels, Macon County; and Fred Armstead, Marengo County.

#### 28 Years

W. Dickson Farrior and Charlie King Jr., Lowndes County.

#### 32 Years

Mike Gillespie, Madison County.

#### 36 Years

W. Hardy McCollum and William Robert Miller, Tuscaloosa County.

#### Late commissioners remembered

In accordance with tradition, attendees in ACCA's 84th Annual Convention observed a moment of silence in member of commissioners who died during the preceding year. A memorial resolution was also provided to the families of Commissioners Phillip Forrester, Houston County, and James "Pappy" Dunn, Calhoun County.



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## From the Cover

# Marengo County Commission honored for excellence

The Marengo County Commission's work to preserve labor and delivery service at a local hospital has garnered one of three statewide awards presented by the Association of County Commissions of Alabama.

The Marengo County Commission received the 21st Annual Award for Excellence in County Government in the Rural Category. The award recognizes innovative and effective programs initiated or completed between July 1, 2011, and June 30, 2012, in counties with populations less than 50,000.

The winning entry, titled "Saving Labor and Delivery," was chosen best among all entries during the judging process. The entry detailed how the Marengo County Commission spearheaded work by county leaders, city leaders and the local medical community to preserve the labor and delivery department at the county's only hospital and to strategically assist the hospital to remain viable for years to come.

The project resulted in \$3.2 million in annual cost savings at the hospital and a plan to save labor and delivery that had support from the county, city, hospital and physicians.

"In no small part as a result of the Marengo County Commission's leadership, essential healthcare services will continue to be delivered to citizens for years to come, and a major employer and economic development engine has been financially strengthened," the entry states.

The award honors programs implemented by the commission itself and not its agencies or boards, and it does not recognize required programs the county has merely carried out well. Instead, the award honors special efforts by commissions to meet the needs of their communities using innovative methods.

"County commissions are doing a great deal of excellent work above and beyond normal county services that often goes unrecognized or unnoticed," said ACCA Executive Director Sonny Brasfield. "The Association's awards program helps focus attention on the efforts that county commissions are putting forward each day to better their communities and provide unique services."

Judges used a numerical scoring system emphasizing the program's stated objective, involvement of the county commission in the program's implementation, the benefit of the program to the taxpayer and the program's overall quality.



*ACCA's 2011-2012 President Tim Choate (second from right) presents the 2012 Excellence in County Government Award (rural category) to the Marengo County delegation: (from left) County Administrator Meredith Hammond and Commissioners Ken Tucker, Calvin Martin, John Crawford Jr. and Michael Thompson.*

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## From the Cover

### Mobile County earns award for new citizens academy

The Mobile County Commission's work to bring government closer to the people has garnered one of three statewide awards presented by the Association of County Commissions of Alabama.

The Mobile County Commission received the 21st Annual Award for Excellence in County Government in the Urban Category. The award recognizes innovative and effective programs initiated or completed between July 1, 2011, and June 30, 2012, in counties with populations more than 50,000.

The winning entry, titled "Mobile County Citizens Academy," was chosen best among all entries during the judging process. Citizens who applied to participate met for seven evening sessions at one-month intervals to get a behind-the-scenes look at county government. Topics included the county road department, law enforcement, finances and parks. Citizens who completed the program went through a graduation ceremony at the last session.

"County commissions are doing a great deal of excellent work above and beyond normal county services that often goes unrecognized or unnoticed," said ACCA Executive Director Sonny Brasfield. "The Association's awards program helps focus attention on the efforts that county commissions are putting forward each day to better their communities and provide unique services."

The Excellence in County Government award honors programs implemented



*Mobile County Commissioner Merceria Ludgood, left, and Commission President Connie Hudson, right, accept the 2012 Excellence in County Government Award (urban category) from 2011-12 ACCA President Tim Choate.*

by the commission itself and not its agencies or boards, and it does not recognize required programs the county has merely carried out well. Instead, the award honors special efforts by commissions to meet the needs of their communities using innovative methods.

#### Start thinking now about National County Government Month 2013

It's not too soon to start planning how to mark April, which is National County Government Month, in a meaningful way. And what could be more significant than a project that builds community support and understanding of county government?

A County Citizens Academy, modeled on Mobile's successful program, would accomplish just that. ACCA is preparing a toolkit for counties that want to adapt the academy to work in their own communities. The toolkit should be available early next year, so participating counties could launch their County Citizens Academies in April.

Questions? Contact Sallie Gowan, 334-234-7594 or [sgowan@alabamacounties.org](mailto:sgowan@alabamacounties.org).



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## Alabama Local Government Training Institute honorees

Each year at the ACCA Annual Convention, the Alabama Local Government Institute recognizes commissioners, chairmen/presidents and chairmen/probate judges who have completed requirements of the various education programs.

“Professional development for our county officials will always remain one of the Association’s priorities for our membership,” said ACCA Executive Director Sonny Brasfield. “As with any organization, the sharing of new ideas and information is the best way to grow and prosper. The involvement of county employees and officials only enhances our efforts to improve

county government and the services it provides at the local level.”

The Level I program requires 50 hours of coursework, including mandatory classes in County Government and the Commissioner, Ethical and Legal Issues, Financial Administration and Roads and Bridges.

This educational program began in 1994 as a mandatory program for first-time county commissioners by act of the Alabama Legislature.

The Level II program requires completion of the Level I plus an additional 70 hours of coursework.

“Serving effectively as a county commissioner requires specialized knowledge and skills, which aren’t always apparent until you’ve been elected,” said ACCA President Ricky Harcrow. “These courses equip commissioners to be better public servants, and there is no way to put a dollar figure on the value of that. The commissioners who have gone ‘above and beyond’ to complete the Level II certificate are especially to be commended.”

The Alabama Local Government Training Institute is a joint effort between ACCA and Auburn University’s Center for Governmental Services, and classes are supervised by a board of directors, composed of county officials, educators and members of the Alabama Legislature.

### ALGTI Level I Certificates

M. Chris Kuykendall, Dekalb County; David Quarker Sr., Escambia County;

### Want to graduate from ALGTI next summer?

The 2012-2013 course schedule is posted at [www.bit.ly/algti12-13](http://www.bit.ly/algti12-13).

It includes a full schedule of Level I courses plus four different electives to choose from to complete Level I or work toward a Level II certificate.

A new online registration process through Auburn University’s Center for Governmental Services is available at [www.bit.ly/algti-reg](http://www.bit.ly/algti-reg).

Questions? Call Auburn University at 334-844-4782.

Toby Seay, Geneva County; George Bowman, Sandra L. Brown, W. David Carrington and Joe Knight, Jefferson County; Prentis Davis, Lawrence County; Phil Riddick, Madison County; Marcus Campbell, Sumter County; and John Luker and Jackie Swinford, Talladega County.

### ALGTI Level II Certificates

Dean Calvert, Blount County; Elzora C. Fluker, Greene County; Robert Ham, Lee County; Merceria Ludgood, Mobile County; and Bobby Everett, Winston County.

### Long-serving commissioners who hold the Level II Certificate

Bobby L. Agee, Chilton County; Rhondel Rhone, Clarke County; Stanley Menefee, Limestone County; and Albert Daniels, Macon County.

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# From the Cover

## County Government Education Institute awards certificates

The Association of County Commissions of Alabama's Annual Convention is also the time each year when county employees are honored for completing various education programs offered through the County Government Education Institute. These are tested programs that require 48 hours or more of coursework.

"The backbone of county government is composed of key staff leaders who make critical day-to-day decisions about how to best deliver services to citizens," said ACCA Executive Director Sonny Brasfield. "These individuals – whether their job title is county administrator, engineer, 9-1-1 director or something else – deserve to be recognized for making this investment, and it is wise for commissioners to make professional development a priority for them."

The Association oversees CGEI.

### Certificate in County Administration

Connie Powell, Chilton County; Charlene Frye, Clay County; Marie Livingston and Charlotte Slatton, Cullman County; and Janice Stewart, Mobile County.

### Certified County Administrator

Lois Morris, Clarke County; Sandra Erickson, Jackson County; and Kellie Long, St. Clair County.

### Certificate in County Engineering Administration

Michelle Royals, Crenshaw County; and Robert Nail, Etowah County.

### ALTIST awards CRE

The Alabama Local Tax Institute for Standards and Training awarded the certified revenue examiner designation to Twyla Jackson, revenue auditor in Montgomery County.

### Certificate in Emergency Communication Administration

Mike Smith, Colbert County; Chad Sowell, Henry County; and Victor Kennedy, Talladega County.

### Basic Level Certificate

Karen Lawson, Covington County.

### Six earn CCRO designation

The County Revenue Officers Association of Alabama, an affiliate of ACCA, runs its own certification program in conjunction with Jacksonville State University. This program, consisting of five 20-hour courses, culminates in the certified county revenue officer designation.

### 2012 recipients

Susan Owens and Tommy Cole, Marshall County  
Clarence Berg and Marvin McDowell, Mobile County  
Clayton Brown and Annette A. Maxwell, Tuscaloosa County



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## President's Corner

*continued from p. 5*

map to streamline and enhance young people's interest in county government activities and give them opportunities to have a hands-on experience in the day-to-day operations.

I personally want to thank Commissioner Choate, our outgoing president and others like Jerrold Dean, Ricky Burney, Rhondel Rhone, Larry White – and remember James (Pappy) Dunn who has just passed away – and the list is too long to call every name. But they and all the others like them have brought us to where we are today. Now the question becomes “what can i leave behind?” What will I do that will be beneficial for the ACCA's good down the road. One of the most productive things to me is to instill in those who will come after us the importance of serving for the right reason. I can assure you that I have lived a lot longer than I have left to live, and, at the longest point, our time is short. But what would be good for those younger men and women who will take our place...experience is what I am talking about. There is an old saying that goes this way “experience is the best teacher.” I don't know if I have ever agreed with that, but I do agree that experience, though is may not be the best teacher, it is most assuredly the most effective teacher. Some of the most disappointing things in my life have served me well....they have taught me....they have been effective. I think probably all of us can agree in that regard. Some of the misfortunes that we go through burn away the dross, work for our good and make us better vessels for service. Those experiences come to us, and we look back on them now and see the valuable nature they're teaching.

I want to thank our staff for the hard work that got our pre-event debris removal and monitoring contracts off the ground. These types of contracts can serve all counties very well in times of disasters as so many of us are aware after the events of the devastating tornado outbreaks of 2011. Not only the fact that it can be a savings in a financial way, but, more importantly, it will allow our local teams to respond more quickly when disastrous events occur. Also I want to encourage you, as much as possible to continue to use our joint bid program for the simple reason that it ensures a lower price, saves time and administrative efforts.

Our legislative efforts are so very important as you all know. We are working now as we always do, on a comprehensive and aggressive legislative program. With economic times as



## From the Cover

**Some of the misfortunes that we go through burn away the dross, work for our good and make us better vessels for service. Those experiences come to us, and we look back on them now and see the valuable nature they're teaching.**

they are, budget deficits and other revenue problems we all face, I assure you that everything is going to be on the table. We will need all of you in some way. When we call on you please take time to respond to the requests. Your personal contacts in the House and Senate are so very important all the time, but especially during the legislative session. When we contact you we need for you to respond.

I have already appointed the steering committees, and your work will begin shortly. We face numbers of challenges ahead of us including working on an overhaul of the process for passing local legislation. You all know how difficult that can be, the way the process is now. So we have that in our sights. We are also working on a revamp of County Day at

the Legislature and other initiatives that we will be informing you all about. We will be sending out the schedule of district meetings over the state, and these meetings will be the conduit that we will use to keep you informed on the initiatives we plan to pursue.

Let me say in conclusion that I cannot thank you enough for giving me this opportunity. I know next year when Mrs. Wood will be standing here and she will have ideas and thoughts that will supersede all that I have said and that will be as it should be....that's all in the growing process. It's good for us. You as public servants are the very backbone of our communities... you are subjected to criticism in many ways by those who

*continued on p. 28*

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## From the Cover

### President's Corner

*continued from p. 27*

many times don't even know what your responsibilities are, but let me encourage you in this manner by saying that in our little trials or our great troubles.....our heavy crosses or our painful losses .....simply said..... it is a part of the process. It makes us better servants and hopefully educates us in more ways than we can immediately recognize.

You are such a wonderful group. I count it an honor to serve with you and for you. However I might be of service to you, please do not hesitate to contact me anytime. As we conclude here we are looking forward to having a great time. We thank all our sponsors for providing all you will enjoy and



*Posing at the convention banquet are ACCA's 2012-13 officers: (from left) President Ricky Harcrow, DeKalb County; First Vice President Debbie Wood, Chambers County; and Second Vice President Merceria Ludgood, Mobile County.*

when you see our sponsors be sure to let them know how much we appreciate their continued support of the ACCA.

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## From the Cover

# ACCA liability fund rewards counties for safety

The Association of County Commissions of Alabama's Self-Insured Liability Insurance Fund always marks ACCA's convention with special recognition of outstanding fund members. The presentations are made jointly by ACCA and Meadowbrook Insurance Group, the fund's third-party administrator.

"These awards are a strong reminder to Alabama's county officials and to our citizens that safety in county buildings and by county employees benefits everyone," said ACCA Executive Director Sonny Brasfield. "We are extremely proud of the efforts of these counties for making the safety of our county employees a high priority."

Loss ratio is used as a measure of safety. In all three categories, the county with the lowest loss ratio received a plaque and \$1,500. The second- and third-place counties received plaques and \$1,000. The winning counties and their loss ratios were are listed below.

Category 1 consisted of counties with fund contributions less than \$100,000. In this category, Cleburne County led with a loss ratio of 2.73 percent, followed by Hale County at 3.69 percent and Coosa County at 5.24 percent.

Category 2 consisted of counties with fund contributions of \$100,000 or more but less than \$200,000. In this category, Bibb County led with a loss ratio of 11.40 percent, followed by Franklin County at 13.35 percent and Colbert County at 15.43 percent.

Category 3 consisted of counties with fund contributions of \$200,000 or

more. In this category, St. Clair County led with a loss ratio of 5.47 percent, followed by Etowah County at 25.34 percent and Marshall County at 28.86 percent.

Rankings were based on loss ratios for the last three years. Winners are among the 55 counties that are members of the self-funded liability insurance fund sponsored by the Association.

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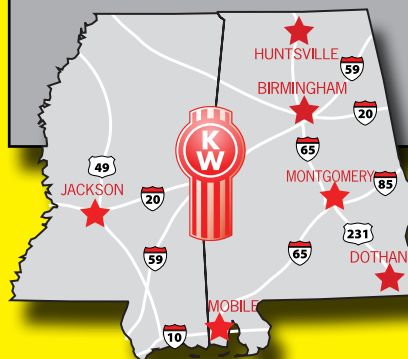
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