

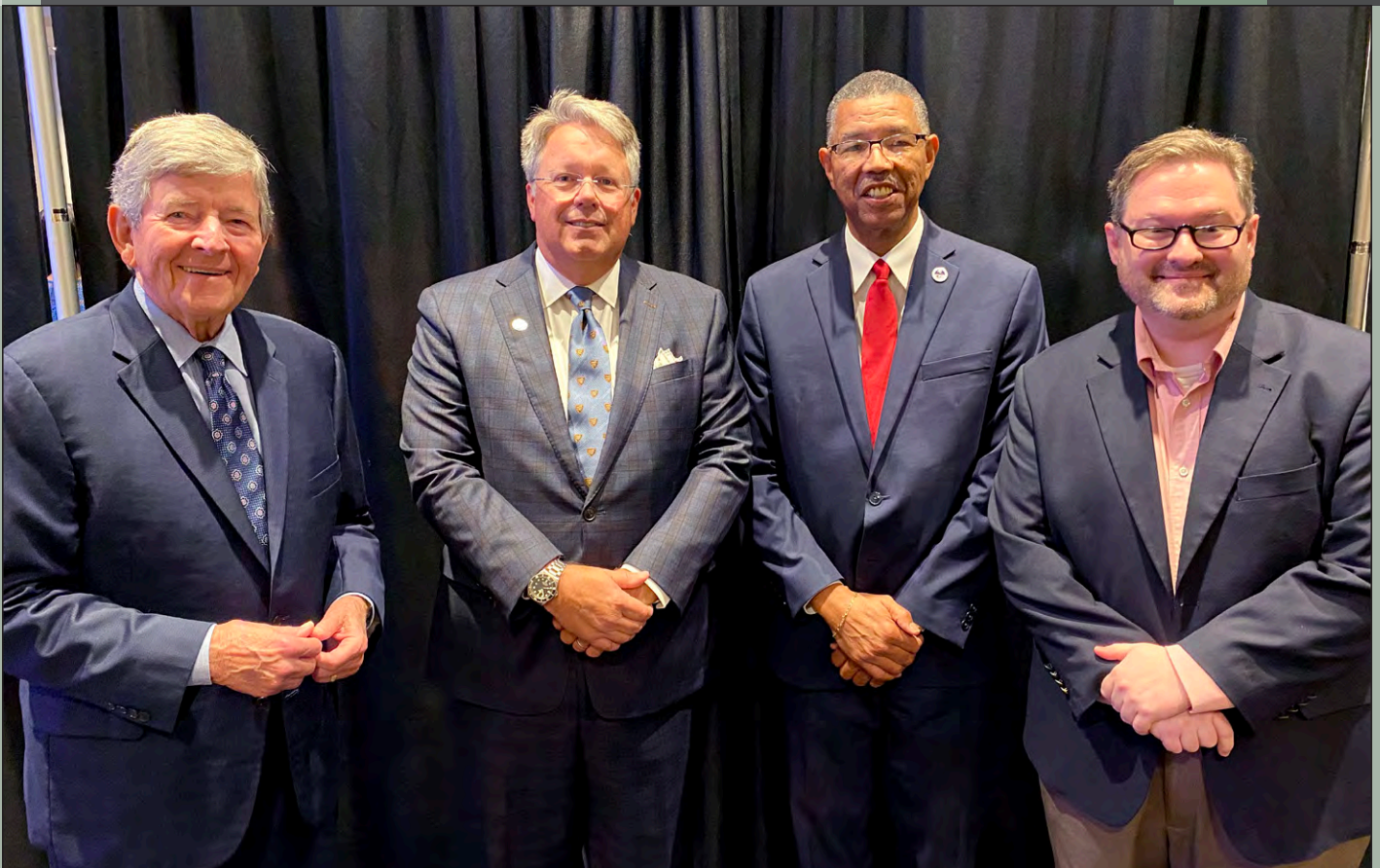
The Alabama

MUNICIPAL

Official publication of the Alabama League of Municipalities

Journal

2022 Annual Convention Highlights



During the Annual Business Session, Mayor Tony Haygood of Tuskegee was elected League President and Councilmember Adam Bourne of Chickasaw was elected League Vice President. Pictured above: Mayor Gary Fuller of Opelika, Immediate Past President; League Executive Director Greg Cochran; Mayor Tony Haygood; and Councilmember Adam Bourne. Minutes of the Business Meeting begin on page 7.

Tuscaloosa, May 11 - 13

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The Alabama MUNICIPAL Journal

Official publication of the Alabama League of Municipalities

2022 Convention Review Special Issue

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 ADAM BOURNE *Councilmember, Chickasaw, Vice President*
 GREG COCHRAN *Montgomery, Executive Director*

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Many thanks to the Tuscaloosa Fire and Police Honor Guard for their participation in the Opening Session of ALM's 2022 Annual Convention in Tuscaloosa.

President's Perspective

2022 Opening Session • May 11 • Tuscaloosa

Mayor Gary Fuller, Opelika • ALM President

Thank you for joining us in Tuscaloosa for our 87th Annual Convention! It's always a treat to visit a college community and it's especially interesting to have a convention on campus. I appreciate Mayor Walt Maddox and his team for working closely with our League staff to make this convention a reality. Because, folks, we *all* know it's been another intense year.

and small business owners in Alabama. This, along with supply chain shortages, historically high gas prices and rising inflation, has made it more challenging in some areas of the state for our citizens to live, work, play and prosper in the ways we as local leaders want for our communities.

And while the Omicron variant of Covid created additional brief roadblocks in early 2022, by March, Alabama was stabilizing and feeling much better about the future – literally and figuratively. But then, Russia invaded Ukraine and the paradigm shifted – not just for those countries, but for most of the world.

Record high prices at the pump have further affected the supply chain as well as the budgeting process in many municipalities since materials for projects like road repair and expansion are not only more expensive but more difficult to procure.

Yet, there have been some silver linings. An unprecedented influx of one-time federal funding through the American Rescue Plan Act provided nearly every municipality in Alabama the opportunity to improve at least some aspect of their communities. And the federal infrastructure bill that was signed into law this past November will make a tremendous difference in Alabama, not

only for transportation but for broadband connectivity and highspeed internet access. Our state lawmakers pledged during the 2022 Session to make broadband a priority – and they held true to their word by passing specific legislation and allotting funding to address broadband inequities in Alabama. We appreciate their leadership on this very important quality-of-life issue.

At the municipal level, our League has continued to work *strategically* and *aggressively* with local, state and national organizations, agencies, stakeholders and partners to advocate on behalf of Alabama's municipalities at the state and congressional levels, particularly regarding stimulus funding. Our League staff has been vigilant in distributing

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When we met last year in Huntsville, we were relieved to be meeting in person, even though our sessions were still somewhat hampered by Covid interference. At that time, we thought surely the world was about to normalize. And we were right – to a degree. But while infection rates were falling, our economy was *booming* – and this created a new and different set of challenges.

According to Bureau of Labor statistics, approximately 252,000 Alabamians quit their jobs from July through October last year. And in the second half of 2021, more than *20 million Americans* quit their jobs – the highest rate ever recorded according to government statistics.

Workforce shortages continue to be a significant burden to the tourism and hospitality industries as well as for retail

Executive Director's Report

2022 Annual Business Session

May 12 • Tuscaloosa

Gregory D. Cochran, CAE

First, I want to share what an honor it is for us to represent you, and I'd like to thank you for the work you do in your communities across our state. It's through your leadership that the business climate and the lives of citizens are enhanced in your municipalities.

Citizens choose to live, work and play in municipalities for many reasons. Their cities and towns are where they are provided economic, education and entertainment opportunities, reliable infrastructure, access to medical care as well as parks and recreation. And, as we well know, most of these foundational quality-of-life resources are rooted in municipal government.

Five years ago, the League recognized that we must remind citizens why they not only choose to live, work and play in their communities but why they should also *invest* in their cities and towns. On the legislative front, lawmakers had begun to react to the national trend of special interest groups seeking to erode local authority. This, coupled with yearly legislative efforts to diminish home rule, has led to municipalities becoming a legislative target threatening the ability for you to provide quality-of-life services in your communities. For instance, during the most recent session, we combated an effort to phase out any current occupational license tax while prohibiting any municipality from levying a new occupational license tax or increasing any existing occupational license tax. For the 27 municipalities that currently rely on an occupational tax as part of their budget cycle, losing that ability would have created a significant financial hardship. This is just one example of the many attempts to chip away at your local authority.

We've also seen a concerted legislative effort throughout the country to reduce local authority. Each meeting and conversation with colleagues from neighboring states further reinforces the importance of the League's mission. Through strategic communication, focused advocacy efforts and intentional outreach programs, we endeavor to not only engage but continually remind state and federal policy makers, local businesses and citizens how their lives are enhanced through the quality-of-life services provided by municipal government.

To protect and strengthen local government, your League staff has begun looking inward in order to focus our efforts outward. Daily we ask ourselves how we can best serve you



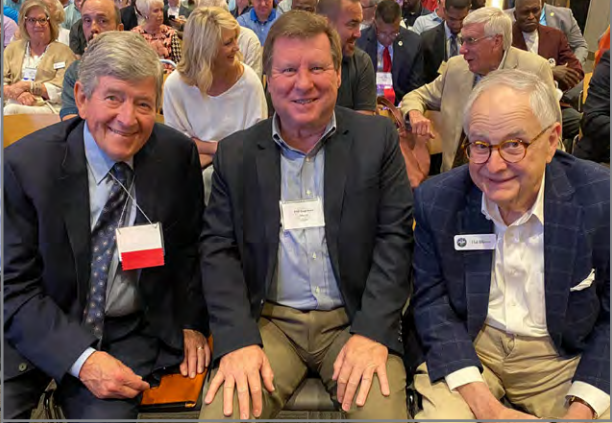
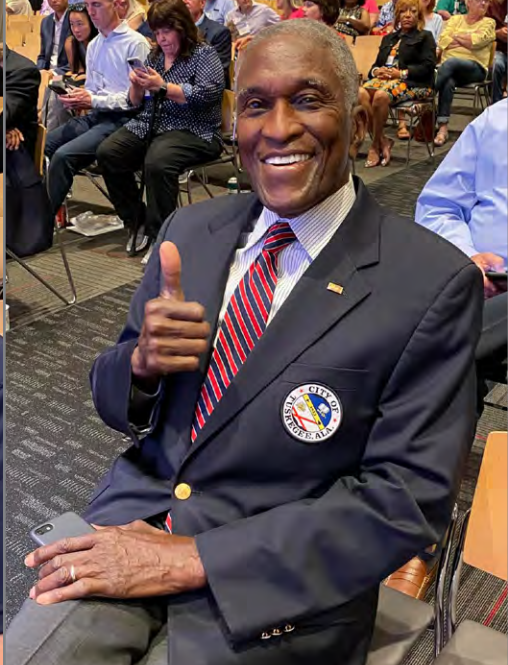
and what resources we can provide to help you best serve your citizens.

Municipalities are the foundation of our state's economy. We have used this tagline in our publications, marketing materials and public appearances during the past two years. We're now hearing others share this message because they have begun to understand that when our cities and towns prosper, our state prospers and – most importantly – our citizens prosper.

We have also made a concerted effort to expand our staff and provide necessary training to ensure that everyone is performing at their peak. And, let me pause here to say that you can ask any organization in Montgomery, any legislator or anyone who works in state government – your League has the BEST STAFF in America! We have recruited nothing but FIVE STARS!

Additionally, we are providing intentional training, resources, tools and networking opportunities to our members and stakeholders to assist them in being their best selves. We continue to provide CMO training sessions across our state to ensure that everyone has a chance to strengthen their core in the fundamentals of municipal government and last year we launched an Economic Development Academy developed in conjunction with the Alabama Community College System (ACCS) and supported by an advisory council of industry leaders to educate and engage municipal officials on the essential elements and phases of economic development. This Academy is unique statewide in that it focuses on *your* role as an elected leader in the economic development process, particularly regarding evaluating abatements, legal processes and implications, correctly marketing the community, gaging the community's expectations, workforce development as well as other key aspects of the development process. We

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Minutes of the 2022 Annual Business Session

May 12 • Tuscaloosa

The Annual Business Session of the Convention of the Alabama League of Municipalities was called to order at 10:30 a.m., May 12, 2022, by President Gary Fuller, Mayor of Opelika, at the Bryant Conference Center in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. President Fuller welcomed the attendees.

President Fuller called on Greg Cochran, Executive Director of the Alabama League of Municipalities for his annual remarks. He reviewed the past year and all the successes and challenges that the League and its staff successfully navigated. *A full copy of his report begins on page 5 of this publication.*

Greg Cochran then presented to the membership the video annual reports for the Municipal Workers' Compensation Fund, Inc. (MWCF), the Alabama Municipal Insurance Corporation (AMIC), the Alabama Municipal Funding Corporation (AMFund), and Municipal Intercept Services (MIS). *Transcripts of these reports can be found on pages 15-18 of this publication.*

After the various board reports, Greg Cochran acknowledged visiting non-active past presidents. He next presented a video memorializing past president of ALM, Bobby Payne, former mayor of Tallassee. At the conclusion of the video, Greg Cochran called upon ALM General Counsel, Lori Lein, to read the list of current and former officials who have died since the 2021 ALM Convention. *The complete list can be found on page 24 of this publication.* After reading the names, Lori Lein asked that if anyone has any other names to be included, to please get the information to an ALM staff member before the close of the convention.

President Fuller thanked Greg Cochran for his reports and then called on Lori Lein who read the rules for voting during the League Business Session.

After the reading of the rules, President Fuller informed the membership that the Executive Committee had met on May 11, 2022, to prepare a slate of nominees to be presented for consideration. He noted that they had a tough assignment choosing officers for the next year from an abundance of very qualified candidates. He then called on Lori Lein to read the report on nominations:

LEADERSHIP

For President: Tony Haygood, Mayor, Tuskegee

For Vice President: Adam Bourne, Councilmember, Chickasaw

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

From the First Congressional District:

1. Mayor Jim Staff, Atmore
2. CM Katherine Breeden, Loxley
3. Mayor Sherry Sullivan, Fairhope
4. CM Newton Cromer, Saraland
5. Mayor Jason Stringer, Citronelle

From the Second Congressional District:

1. CM Michael Gay, Millbrook
2. Mayor Bill Gillespie, Prattville
3. Mayor Dexter McLendon, Greenville
4. Mayor Jason Reeves, Troy
5. Mayor Mark Saliba, Dothan

From the Third Congressional District:

1. Mayor Rusty Jessup, Riverside
2. CM Billy Pearson, Lincoln
3. Mayor Alberta McCrory, Hobson City
4. Mayor Ron Anders, Auburn
5. CM Michael Ellis, Lafayette

From the Fourth Congressional District:

1. Mayor Woody Jacobs, Cullman
2. Mayor Allen Dunavant, Glen Allen
3. CM Deverick Williams, Gadsden
4. Mayor Mike Lockhart, Muscle Shoals
5. Mayor Scott Reeves, Hokes Bluff

From the Fifth Congressional District:

1. Mayor Randy Garrison, Hartselle
2. Mayor Gary Livingston, Eva
3. Mayor Tommy Battle, Huntsville
4. Mayor Sandra Burroughs, Lexington
5. CM Tommy Perry, Priceville

From the Sixth Congressional District:

1. Mayor Scott Brakefield, Alabaster
2. Mayor Ashley Curry, Vestavia Hills
3. Mayor Bobby Scott, Center Point
4. Mayor Frank Brocato, Hoover
5. Mayor Bobbie White, Brent

From the Seventh Congressional District:

1. CM Marche` Johnson, Montgomery
2. Mayor James Perkins, Selma
3. Mayor Gwendolyn Rogers, Linden
4. Mayor Brian Puckett, Helena
5. Mayor Sheldon Day, Thomasville

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Thank you for your hospitality, Tuscaloosa!



Above: University of Alabama Coach Nick Saban and Tuscaloosa Mayor Walt Maddox during the May 12 General Session. Below: Mayor Walt Maddox welcomes delegates during Opening Session; ALM Director of External Affairs Kayla Bass, Mayor Walt Maddox, Mayor Gary Fuller of Opelika, Coach Nick Saban, Mayor Tony Haygood of Tuskegee and ALM Executive Director Greg Cochran.



President's Acceptance Address

Mayor Tony Haygood, Tuskegee

On May 12, Tuskegee Mayor Tony Haygood was elected by his municipal colleagues during the Annual Business Session to serve as President of the Alabama League of Municipalities for 2022-2023.

I am truly humbled and excited to offer this acceptance speech for the Office of President of the Alabama League of Municipalities. I want to thank the nomination committee and my fellow mayors and councilpersons for your trust, confidence and encouragement. GOD is good, and I thank Him for all His blessings as we are gathered here in my birthplace, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, born in “DCH” as the young people call it, Druid City Hospital, just across the campus. Just up the road is Stillman College where my parents met and married in college, and over in West End is the famous Druid High School that I was pleased to attend for half a semester with my sisters before we moved to historic Tuskegee, Alabama.

At this time, we face tremendous uncertainty due to the continued presence of COVID-19, the war in Ukraine, supply chain disruption, rising inflation, and

an increasingly “toxic” political environment; therefore, our best efforts as local leaders are critically needed.

As Past President Ronnie Marks of Athens put it in his acceptance speech, we change our State, our Country and the quality of our lives in our communities at the grassroots level ... where you and I serve. *We* are closest to the people, and, on a daily basis, we hear their concerns and their expectations. Whether we like what they say or not. Because we are the closest to the citizens and hear from them more often than many others, we also have the greatest opportunity to impact them and offer guidance and direction. Today I also echo Past President Jesse Mathews who in his acceptance speech reminded us: “Working Together Works”. So I’d like to ask us all to consider how we can work together to improve our communities, our state and our nation.

The work we do as local elected officials is not merely to improve the quality of life for our current constituents, but, most importantly, to improve the quality of life for the *next generation*. The average citizen often does not realize all the actions and efforts necessary to deliver the services that are requested and expected of us. *Thank you*, mayors, councilpersons and other elected and appointed officials for your willingness to serve, your time and your sacrifice in the effort to improve the quality of life for citizens in your communities.

I want to thank my family and all my relatives who support me, encourage me and don’t accept no “half-stepping”. Their expectations of me are high and have always been high, but their support has always been there to push me forward.

I thank Mayor Gary Fuller of Opelika, our outgoing president for his leadership this past year and for taking time to share his knowledge, wisdom, experiences and a few good laughs. Gary has accomplished much in Opelika, and I know he’ll continue to contribute to the League. While serving as Vice-President, I really enjoyed teaming with both Gary and Greg Cochran.

I congratulate incoming Vice President Adam Bourne and look forward to working with him on behalf of League goals and objectives during this next year.

A special word of thanks to Executive Director Greg Cochran for his insightful and positive leadership as well as this outstanding team here at the League. They do a great job – whether it’s advocacy in the Legislature, organizing these great conventions, providing sound legal advice, directing us to financial resources and explaining the guidelines, providing CMO trainings for newly elected officials or welcoming you to the organization – they are always very professional, efficient and supportive of League members. As far back as 2012 when I joined the League as a city councilman, they have demonstrated a very pleasant demeanor and have always been willing to help and guide me in the right direction.

A very special thank you to my hometown, Tuskegee, Alabama – to our citizens for electing me to serve over the last 10 years, four on the Council as Mayor Pro-Tem, and now in my sixth year as Mayor. As I like to say: *It’s a Great Day in Tuskegee!*

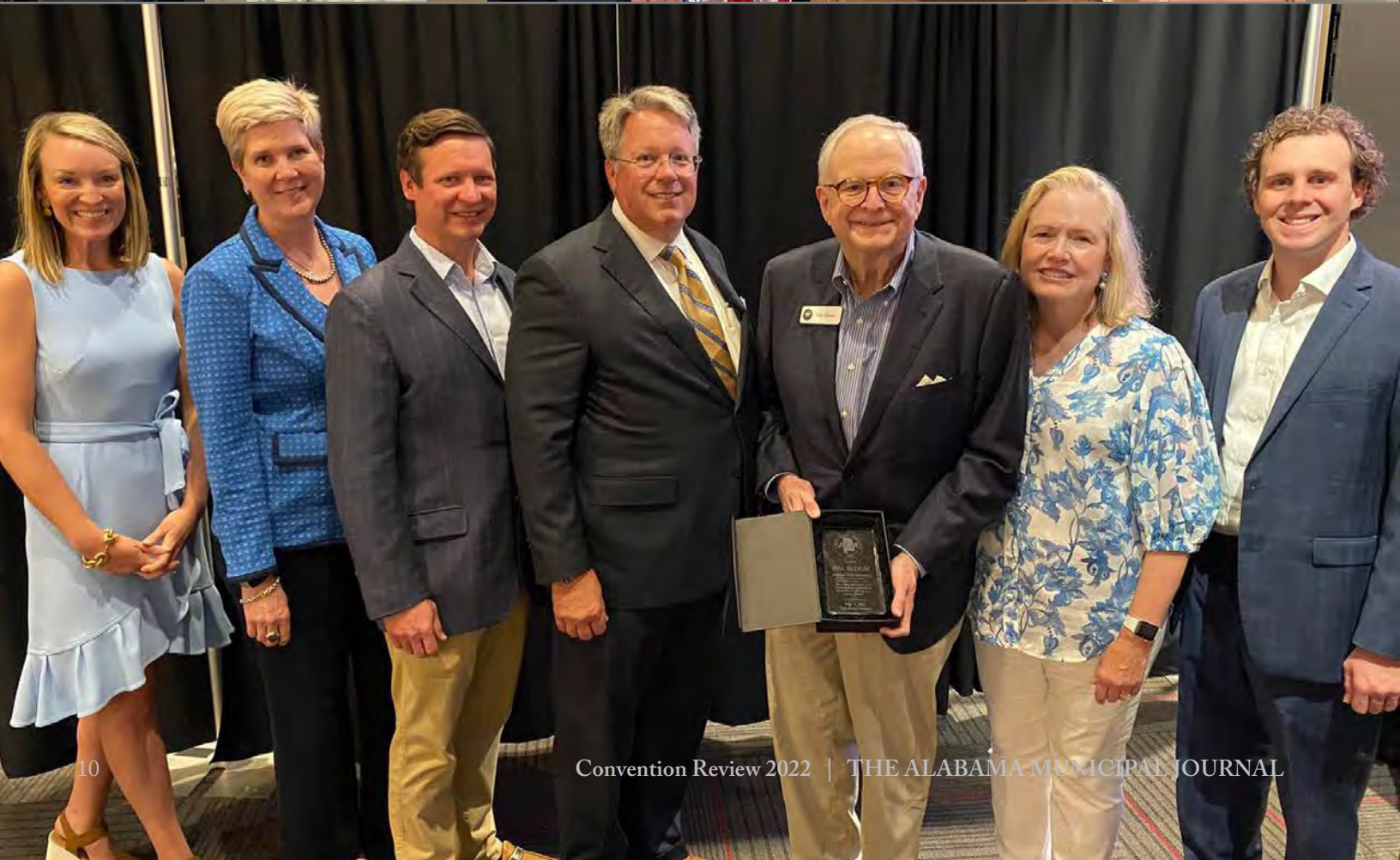
Now, we, too, have had those citizens ... you know, the extremely difficult ones we hear about in League roundtable

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League Honors Hal Bloom

During the 2022 Opening Session, Executive Director Greg Cochran and League President Mayor Gary Fuller of Opelika (pictured top left) honored the League's contract lobbyist and founding principal of the The Bloom Group, Inc., Hal Bloom, for his dedication and service to Alabama's municipalities since 1986. Pictured bottom left to right: ALM Director of External Affairs Kayla Bass; ALM General Counsel Lori Lein, ALM Director of Governmental Affairs Bryan Parker, ALM Executive Director Greg Cochran, Hal Bloom, Anne Bloom and ALM Director of Policy and Research Baker Allen.

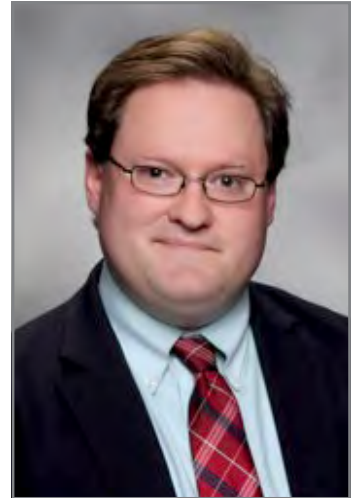


Councilmember Adam Bourne of Chickasaw Elected League Vice President

On May 12, Chickasaw Councilmember Adam Bourne was elected by his municipal colleagues to serve as Vice President of the Alabama League of Municipalities for 2022-2023. He was elected and took office during the League's Annual Business Session, which was held in Tuscaloosa.

Councilmember Bourne has served on the Chickasaw City Council since November 2008. Additionally, he has volunteered as a member of the Chickasaw Board of Utilities, the Chickasaw Library Board and as chair of both the Chickasaw Industrial and Commercial Development Boards. He spent a year as president of the Mobile County Municipal Association, after having served as secretary and vice-president. He has also served as president of the board of directors for the Chickasaw Family Center and as secretary of the Chickasaw Kiwanis Club.

Councilmember Bourne has been active with the League since his first election, completing his Advanced Certified Municipal Official designation in 2013. He served as a member of the Committee on Finance, Administration and Intergovernmental Relations, eventually becoming vice-chair in 2011 then serving as chair for the following two years after which he joined the League's Board of Directors for several years until becoming vice-chair and then chair of the League's Committee on State and Federal Legislation. Additionally, he has served as the League's appointee on the County & Municipal Government Capital Improvement Trust Fund Advisory Board since 2012. Outside municipal service, he is an attorney, a tax administrator, a graduate of the University of South Carolina and the University of Alabama as well as a member of St. Michael's Episcopal Church. His wife, Jenny, is a teacher and vice president of the Chickasaw Board of Education. They have one daughter, Mary Elise. ■



The Stillman College Choir performed the National Anthem during the Opening Session of the League's 2022 Convention in Tuscaloosa. Under the direction of Jocqueline K. Richardson, the Choir is a choral ensemble comprised of music and non-music majors. Its repertoire consists of a variety of sacred and secular choral literature from the Renaissance to the Contemporary periods. The Stillman College Choir performs at college events, local and regional churches and special events throughout the academic year.



were thrilled to accept 30 communities into the inaugural class and are already considering how the program should evolve in 2023.

Beginning this September, the Alabama Communities of Excellence program (ACE), which was begun in 2002 as a nonprofit and currently works with 46 designated communities, will transfer to the League as an additional program provided

to our membership. Our goal with this transfer is to not only preserve the foundation of the program but to strengthen the current ACE communities while expanding ACE's scope and range beyond its original structure.

Two years ago, we successfully launched our strategic partnership program, which allows you to purposefully build relationships with community specialists and provides additional access to resources that can be implemented in your communities. At every League-hosted event, we are mindful about adding various networking opportunities so you can meet and discuss issues impacting your community.

I want to thank our strategic and community partners for believing in the League and our membership. You have each committed invaluable resources, including money and time, to assist the League in reaching our goal of building a stronger Alabama.

My father served as a frogman in the U.S. Navy, and their motto was: *The only easy day was yesterday.*

As an organization, we have never worked harder than we have the past two years. Because, for us, the easy day was yesterday. Our team recognizes that we have a huge responsibility to our members. Our decisions and actions, as well as the resources we make available to you, can directly impact the success of your municipality. Building relationships and intentional collaboration is not only necessary but critical for municipalities to remain relevant and for our state to be successful.

In closing, I would like to thank the League's executive committee and board of directors for their leadership and unwavering support. I know each of you appreciates the commitment and passion of your staff as well as our ongoing efforts on your behalf. ■



Greg Cochran (standing far right) and ALM President Tony Haygood (standing, middle) with active and inactive ALM Past Presidents.

discussions that we've come to recognize as CAVE People (Citizens Against Virtually Everything). However, I am more than pleased with the steady progress my community is making as we rebuild our historic city, home of Tuskegee University and the celebrated Tuskegee Airmen! Thanks also to my fellow city councilmembers from Tuskegee who have put in a tremendous amount of work and time in extra meetings as we try to get a handle on our challenges and take advantage of all the extra money and opportunities available thanks to ARPA and the Infrastructure Bill. And special thanks to Councilmember, former Mayor and Past President of the League Johnny Ford.

You know, local leaders are the foundation, the base of the elected official's pyramid hierarchy. As we are strong together, Alabama is stronger together – and *America* is stronger. Communication is very important. Piper Kerman stated the most important survival skill is the ability to find common ground with other people. Regardless of our background affiliations and identifications – conservative, liberal, moderate, independent, White, Caucasian, Black, African American, Asian, Hispanic or multicultural background, wealthy, middle income, low income or poor ... let us treat each other with dignity, respect and appreciation.

Recent newsclips of the late Utah Senator Orin Hatch, who served 42 years as one of the strongest Conservatives in the U. S. Senate, showed him embracing Senator Edward M. Kennedy, someone who many would consider one of the strongest Democratic/Liberal Senators, because they decided, regardless of their positions, they appreciated each other as elected senators and as colleagues deserving respect.

Paraphrasing world-renowned poet Maya Angelou – people may not remember your name or your title or your position, but they will certainly remember how you made them feel.

We then must decide what our expectation is for the “Great State of Alabama”, and what are we willing to do to make that “Great” expectation a reality. No longer can we operate on the politics of division. We cannot afford to allow people to use divisive politics and campaign rhetoric to keep groups and individuals battling against each other. It's nonsense and the same old politics of divide and control. When we follow that pattern, we all lose, Alabama!

We must now focus on healing and community building. We must have a commitment to service ... Service that we have pledged to our GOD, to our families and, most importantly, to the communities that elected us, as well as the State of Alabama.

We must promote the Truth as it is revealed to us. Dr. Booker T. Washington said: “A Lie doesn't become truth, wrong doesn't become right and evil doesn't become good, just because it's accepted by a majority.”



Past President Mayor Fuller of Opelika passed the gavel to Mayor Haygood during the Annual Business Session.

William Cullen Bryant and Martin Luther King, Jr., shouted boldly: “Truth crushed to the Earth will rise again!” We cannot afford to be silent in the face of truth. Dr. King reminds us: “There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but he must take it because conscience tells him it is right.” As local leaders in our communities, that is what is expected of us. Remember: “To whom much is given, much will be required.” Luke 12:48.

It is time for us to lead with the example of working together to promote truth, respect, trust and sincerity to find solutions to our common problems and challenges. Yes, local leaders, *you have been called to serve for such a time as this*. To heal our communities and heal our State and our Nation during this challenging time. The ultimate measure of a man or woman is not where he or she stands in times of comfort and convenience, but where they stand at times of challenge and controversy. (Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.)

Margaret Meade stated: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

I'm ready to work with you, our great local leaders, together with this impressive team at the Alabama League of Municipalities. I humbly accept the nomination to the position as President of the League. *It's a great day in the City of Tuskegee and all of Macon County and, today, it's a great day in the State of Alabama and the United States of America!* I pray God will continue to bless you ALL! ■



Governor Ivey Addresses Convention Delegates

Governor Kay Ivey delivered remarks to delegates and guests Wednesday, May 11, during the Opening Session of ALM's 2022 Annual Convention at the University of Alabama Bryant Conference Center in Tuscaloosa. *(Photos by Hal Yeager/Governor's Office)*



MWCF Board Report • 2022 Business Session • Tuscaloosa

The Municipal Workers Compensation Fund is a program of the Alabama League of Municipalities that was formed **BY** Alabama's municipalities **FOR** Alabama's cities and towns.

Founded in 1976, MWCF is the second oldest League insurance pool in the nation and was created at a time when national insurance carriers were *abandoning* Alabama and her communities.

MWCF understands your needs because we are *your* Alabama neighbor.

MWCF is led by a board of five veteran elected officials made up of mayors and councilmembers from municipalities large and small. Under the board's leadership, MWCF strives to not only provide workers comp insurance but to promote *safe* workplaces that ensure employees return home healthy and well after serving their communities.

MWCF members receive access to invaluable resources including a dedicated Loss Control team that provides risk management and safety services such as specialty training and seminars, free access to online training through LocalGovU, a FATS firearm training simulator and real-time, behind-the-wheel training through a state-of-the-art SKIDCAR system.

Today we are pleased to bring you the annual report on the activities of **YOUR** Municipal Workers Compensation Fund.

- MWCF currently has more than 646 members.
- Membership renewals have remained steady year over year.
- Net premiums for the 2021 fund year were approximately \$28 million.
- During the October 2021 board meeting, the Board of Directors approved a distribution of \$4 million to be given as a renewal dividend to eligible members towards their 2022 premiums.
- Total dividends for all fund years is now in excess of \$77 million.
- Unaudited financial statements show total assets of \$205 million as of January 31, 2022.
- MWCF remains financially very strong.

Because MWCF is an Alabama company representing Alabama communities with Alabama professionals, we remain connected to your *unique* needs.

The MWCF Board of Directors thanks you for your membership and continued support.

MWCF prides itself in achieving common goals through uncommon service.

MWCF is **YOUR** local workers comp provider.



www.almwcf.org

AMIC Board Report • 2022 Business Session • Tuscaloosa

The Alabama Municipal Insurance Corporation is not only a not-for-profit mutual insurance company, it is wholly owned and controlled by its member cities and towns. Five elected officials from throughout the State of Alabama sit on the Board of Directors and take an active role in keeping AMIC focused on its original goals.



AMIC was formed 33 years ago with \$6 million in capital contributions from 233 cities and towns. Today AMIC is the premier provider of property and casualty insurance for public entities in Alabama and the capitalized members that helped start AMIC have now received more than \$16.8 million in dividends!

Speaking of Numbers:

- AMIC has paid out over \$506,000,000 in claims since 1989.
- AMIC insures approximately 95 percent of all public entities in Alabama and has 586 members.
- AMIC retains over 99 percent of its business annually.
- Total assets exceed \$147 million.
- Current premiums exceed \$50 million.
- And total surplus is over \$72 million.
- AMIC also insures more than \$8 billion in property values, 20,000 vehicles and nearly 5,000 police officers.

AMIC provides your cities and towns with its 45 dedicated in-house staff members with services that range from:

- 24/7 claims handling
- A team of 10 sales and underwriting staff that make sure your policies are delivered on time and are correct.
- A dedicated team of 10 loss control staff that provides a range of services and programs from general and police loss control audits to services such as the SKIDCAR, FATS system, Local Gov U library, as well as onsite training and seminars.

The Alabama Municipal Insurance Corporation realizes that its member cities and towns provide essential public services with the most exposure to risk and the least amount of money. AMIC works hard every day to protect you and your ability to continue to deliver those essential services without fear of financial ruin.

From the Board of Directors and everyone at AMIC, thank you for what you do and for your continued support.

And please always remember: We are here to *Insure the Future of YOUR Local Government.*

www.amicentral.org

The Alabama Municipal Funding Corporation was formed in 2006 by the Alabama League of Municipalities to assist Alabama's cities and towns in funding local projects, equipment purchases and refinancing existing debt.

The purpose of AMFund is to provide timely, low-cost, direct bank debt financing to fund almost any size municipal project.



AMFund is managed by a board of directors composed of five municipal elected officials and works with financial advisor Louie Cardinal with Thornton Farish and Leo Lawrenson as pool administrator to take advantage of economies of scale allowing municipalities to:

- Receive competitive, fixed rate debt financing.
- Significantly reduce borrowers' transaction costs.
- Minimize staff time by using straightforward, direct bank debt loan documentation.

AMFund partners with national banking institutions to provide our members competitive fixed rate financing on General Obligation and Revenue borrowing needs for:

- Infrastructure
- Capital improvement projects
- Equipment purchases
- Refinancing of existing loans

AMFund received several funding requests during the 2021 calendar year and was able to assist several applicants in obtaining fixed rate financing for the purchase of equipment and capital improvement projects. Since its inception in January 2006, AMFund has commissioned 77 loans in excess of \$150 million with no borrower defaults. We encourage you to consider AMFund as an option for your refinancing, general obligation, revenue and equipment leasing needs.

We look forward to serving you in the future.

www.amfund.com

MIS Board Report • 2022 Business Session • Tuscaloosa

Does your town or city have debts you just can't seem to collect regardless of your efforts? Well, Municipal Intercept Services may be able to help ... at no charge to your municipality!

In 2014, the Alabama State Legislature enacted an amendment allowing municipalities and counties to attempt to recover delinquent debts owed to them by collecting this debt from the individual's state tax refund.



In 2015, the Alabama League of Municipalities formed Municipal Intercept Services as its clearinghouse entity to act as a conduit between participating Alabama municipalities and the Alabama Department of Revenue.

FREE to eligible participating members, MIS is NOT a debt collection agency or service. Instead, MIS is a UNIQUE way to attempt to recover money owed to your municipality by “intercepting” an individual’s Alabama State tax refund. Debt collection agencies can NOT offer you this service. Any municipal debt that is considered final; is still within its statute of limitations; and is more than 60 days old can be submitted to MIS.

Examples include:

- Municipal Court Fees and Fines
- Judgments
- Library Fees
- Medical, EMS and Hospital Bills
- Ordinance Violations
- Traffic Light Violations
- Parking Fees
- Rental or Lease Agreements
- Returned Checks
- Sanitation and Garbage Fees
- Utility Bills

As of March 3, 2022, MIS had:

- More than 239 active participants.
- Over 324,000 debts in the system valued at more than \$434 MILLION.
- More than 116,000 intercepts with over \$14.7 MILLION disbursed since inception.

MIS is Alabama’s ONLY state tax refund municipal debt recovery program and is PROUD to serve Alabama’s cities and towns!

www.alintercept.org



ALM General Counsel Lori Lein, AAMA President Birmingham City Attorney James Stanley and ALM Assistant General Counsel Rob Johnston answered questions during the Ask Your Attorney session at the 2022 Annual Convention in Tuscaloosa.

As in previous years, ALM’s “Ask Your Attorney” general session was an Annual Convention highlight. Below is a sampling of questions answered during this year’s very popular session held on May 13 at the League’s Convention in Tuscaloosa. The League Legal Department, which has been providing exceptional legal guidance to ALM members for decades, is available during regular business hours to answer your questions.

Q. What is the Role of the League Legal Department?

A. While this was not a question asked by attendees at the convention, it is the first question we answered. Answering your legal questions is one of the primary services the League offers its members. We are seeing a trend, however, where mayors and councilmembers are standing up at a public meeting and stating “I’ve called the League and they said ...” Usually, this is done to publicly correct another councilmember or possibly point out that someone has acted illegally or that some action being proposed is “illegal.” **We urge you to please NOT do this.** We are not a state agency and we do not have any enforcement or regulatory power over our members and therefore when we provide our opinion, based on facts presented, it is just that – an opinion. As we repeatedly tell folks, many of the questions we

get in the legal department don’t lend themselves to a yes/no clear-cut answer. The answer received from the League attorney is largely dependent on the facts of the question presented. Sometimes the facts presented aren’t complete. Change a fact and guess what? The answer changes.

It is vital that every Alabama municipality have an attorney to provide legal advice and represent the municipality’s best interests. The League’s legal department is a resource to assist your municipal needs; it is not a replacement for your municipal attorney. When the law is unclear or the inquiry presents substantial risk of litigation, you’ll need advice from your attorney because he or she will have to represent you should you have to go to court, not us. And finally, you should

not seek our advice in the hopes that we will second-guess your attorney. We are always happy to speak with municipal attorneys in case we can lend them support in the advice that they provide. So please, rather than engage in “got-ya” behavior, please have your municipal attorney contact us at the League.

Q. Can the city/town pay a *per diem* for travel expenses?

A. The short answer is no. Unlike state officers and employees who are specifically authorized to be reimbursed on a *per diem* basis under state law, municipal officials and employees can only be reimbursed for actual travel expenses incurred as provided in Section 36-7-1, Code of Alabama 1975. Advances for expenses are permitted only if they are allowed by resolution of the council and that an itemized statement of actual expenses must be provided by the official or employee immediately upon returning from travel.

Q. If we email or text as an entire council, are we violating the Open Meetings Act (OMA)?

A. Maybe. While it’s important to be mindful anytime there is a ‘quorum’ gathered, regardless of where or how (yes, even electronically) that quorum is gathered, it’s also important to understand that the OMA is only triggered when that quorum begins discussing or deliberating municipal business. Both must be present under the OMA. Officials need to guard against the desire to discuss city business when a quorum is present unless the discussions are part of a properly noticed and convened

meeting. This includes electronic communications. Sending out emails or group text messages to a quorum of the council isn’t in and of itself a problem. In some municipalities, the mayor may push out the upcoming agenda or provide an update to the council on city hall business. Doing so does not set the OMA in motion. If, however, recipients hit ‘reply all’ and start discussing or deliberating what’s in the email, then there could be an OMA issue.

Q. Who do I contact if I have an Ethics Law concern or other conflicts of interest questions?

A. Generally, there are two issues involving conflicts of interest questions: a legal issue and an ethics issue. The League’s Legal Department can help you with the “legal” issue. The Alabama Ethics Commission should address the ethics issue. For the legal issue, several statutes prohibit municipal officers and employees from having specific dealings with a municipality. The one most widely referred to is found in Section 11-43-12, Code of Alabama 1975. This section prohibits officers and employees from having direct or indirect interest in contracts with the municipality. Exceptions to Section 11-43-12 are provided by Section 11-43-12.1 for Class 7 and 8 municipalities. Municipal officials and employees are also subject to Alabama’s Ethics Laws, which are found in Title 36 of the Alabama Code. The purpose of the ethics laws are to ensure a public office is not used for private personal gain and preserving public confidence in the integrity of government. The Alabama Ethics Commission is given authority over Alabama’s Ethics Laws, and ethics questions should be directly submitted to the Ethics Commission. They can be reached at 334-242-2997.

Q. Who is charge of preparing the “agenda” for a council meeting?

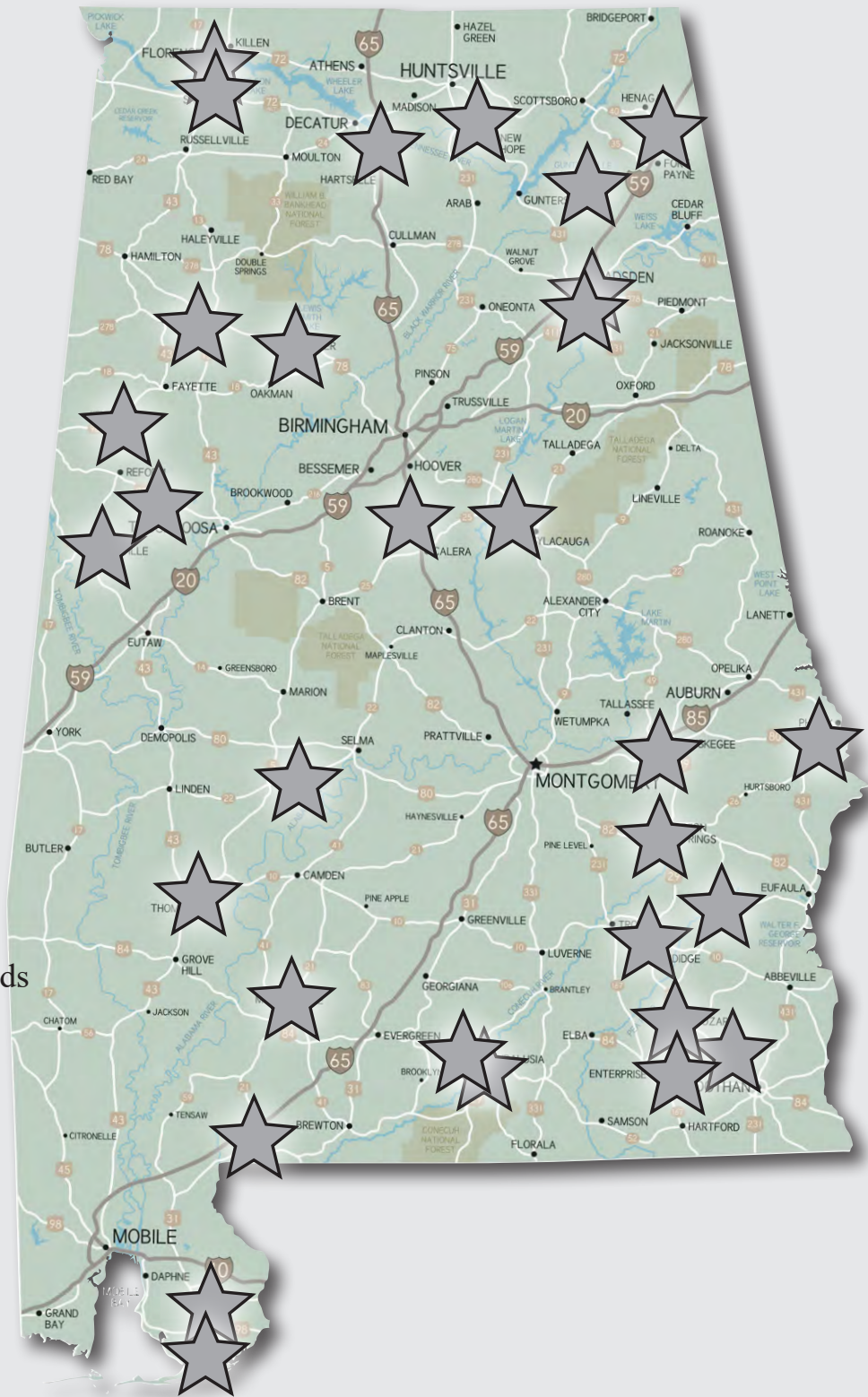
A. In the absence of a policy adopted by the council stating otherwise, the presiding officer is in charge of preparing the agenda before council meetings. However, it must be prepared pursuant to the policies and procedures adopted by majority vote of the council. The council determines its own rules of procedure, except where otherwise provided by law. Section 11-43-52, Code of Alabama 1975. Through those rules, the council can determine how and when items can be placed on the agenda. The council may establish a procedure for creating a preliminary agenda prior to the meeting and establish the person or persons responsible for putting the preliminary agenda together. It should be noted that the preliminary agenda does not become the “official” agenda until adopted by a vote of the council. The proposed agenda is followed as a guide by the chair pending its formal adoption. See Robert’s Rules of Order (10th ed.) p. 361, I. 10-11. An affirmative vote to adopt an agenda may not be reconsidered. See Robert’s Rules of Order (10th ed.) p. 360, I. 18-30. After an “official” agenda has been adopted, no change can be made in it except by a vote of the council. ■



ALM General Counsel Lori Lein at the Ask Your Attorney booth.

2022 Municipal Flag Showcase Participants

- Aliceville
- Andalusia
- Atmore
- Brundidge
- Childersburg
- Clayton
- Daleville
- Florence
- Foley
- Gadsden
- Geraldine
- Glen Allen
- Gordo
- Gulf Shores
- Hammondville
- Jasper
- Midland City
- Millport
- Monroeville
- Muscle Shoals
- Orrville
- Owens Cross Roads
- Ozark
- Pelham
- Phenix City
- Priceville
- River Falls
- Southside
- Thomasville
- Tuskegee
- Union Springs







2022 Distinguished Service Awards

Presented May 11 at the 2022 Annual Convention • Tuscaloosa

Each year during its Annual Convention, the League presents Distinguished Service Awards to mayors and councilmembers who have completed 20, 30, 40 and 50 years of service in municipal government. A total of six awards were announced during the 2022 Annual Convention on May 11 in Tuscaloosa. Not pictured 30 Year Service Awards: Councilmember Walter E. Hazen, Town of Chatom; Mayor Joe Lee, City of Moody; Mayor Clay M. King, City of Samson; and Councilmember Roger Baine, City of Samson.



30 Year Service Award
Mayor Paul R. South
City of Jackson



40 Year Service Award
Councilmember Don A. Mack, Sr.
City of Centreville



“If you want to make everyone happy, don’t be a leader. Sell ice cream.” ~ Coach Nick Saban

In Memory

The League memorializes the following officials who have died in office since its last convention:

- Athens: Frank Travis, councilmember
- Belk: Mike Ellison, mayor
- Berlin: Bruce Bentley, councilmember
- Black: Edward Hatcher, councilmember
- Brighton: Rhonda Bean, councilmember
- Cullman: Andy “Coach” Page, councilmember
- Dodge City: Tawana Canada, mayor
- Elkmont: Jessie Hobbs, councilmember
- Forkland: Joe L. Tuck, mayor pro-tem
- Mobile: Levon Manzie, council president

The League memorializes the following former officials who have died since its last convention:

- Atmore: Howard Shell, former mayor
- Bayou La Batre: Wilmer Lamey, former councilmember
- Bayou La Batre: Arlen Lyons, former councilmember
- Boaz: Charles Smith, former mayor
- Brundidge: Sherroll Tatum, former councilmember
- Childersburg: Billy Joe Meeks, former mayor
- Childersburg: Ralph Rich, former councilmember
- Childersburg: Robert “Bubba” Cleckler, former councilmember
- Childersburg: Margie Sanford, former councilmember
- Childersburg: Robert Harris, former mayor
- Citronelle: Curtis Wainwright, former councilmember
- Citronelle: Warren Carter, former councilmember
- Dothan: Larry Register, former mayor
- Fultondale: Darrell Hubbert, former councilmember
- Glencoe: Ronnie Rampey, former mayor
- Huntsville: Richard Showers, former councilmember
- Kinsey: Charles Douglas, former mayor
- Kinsey: James Green, former councilmember
- Lake View: Daniel “Bruce” Wade, former mayor
- Level Plains: Phillip Glenn Howell, former mayor
- Louisville: Sharon Hobdy, former councilmember
- Opelika: Dr. Robert Lofton, former councilmember
- Prattville: Gwendolyn Teel Babston, former councilmember
- Prichard: Ronald K. Davis, former mayor
- Ragland: Edna Daffron, former councilmember
- Rainbow City: Larry P. Keenum, former councilmember
- Rainbow City: Aaron Swindall, former councilmember
- Riverside: Frank Riddle, former councilmember
- Robertsdale: Robert “Bobby” Ludke, former councilmember
- Selma: Nancy Gardner Sewell, former councilmember
- Sheffield: Janet McLeary, former councilmember
- Southside: William “Bill” Smith, former councilmember
- Tallassee: Robert “Bobby” Payne, former mayor and League Past President
- Thomaston: Eddie L. Jones, Sr., former councilmember
- Troy: Jimmy Lunsford, former mayor
- Yellow Bluff: Sylvester Garner, former councilmember
- Yellow Bluff: Annie Lee Hattaway, former councilmember

League Mourns Passing of Past President

Mayor Robert "Bobby" Payne, ALM President 1996-1997

League Past President and former mayor of Tallassee, Robert "Bobby" Payne, passed away on January 8, 2022, at age 76. Mayor Payne served Tallassee for 32 years – first as a councilmember for 12 years and then as mayor from 1988 until 2016, except for one term in 2008. He is remembered as one of Tallassee's most loyal and enthusiastic advocates, and, in June 2021, a municipal park was named in his honor. In addition to being mayor, Bobby was a member of the Tallassee Chamber of Commerce, Past President of the Tallassee Rotary Club and Past Chair of the Central Alabama Regional Planning Commission. He was also Co-Owner of Town and Country Motors in Tallassee for several years. As mayor, Bobby was an active member of the Alabama League of Municipalities, serving on numerous committees and as League President from 1996 until 1997. He also served as board chair for the Alabama Municipal Insurance Corporation for 4 years with 12 years on the board. His devotion to municipal government and his friendship will be missed by his colleagues throughout Alabama. ■



2022 CMO Training

Jan - Dec: Anytime Training • <https://almonline.org/AnytimeTraining.aspx>

June/July/September Regional Training (Strengthen Your Core)

June 22, Dothan • July 27, Muscle Shoals • September 21, Orange Beach

August

Congressional In-State Luncheons (details to follow)

November 8-10

Municipal Leadership Institute/CMO Graduation, Orange Beach

November

NLC City Summit * (www.nlc.org)

Registration is limited. Visit www.almonline.org for training and registration information.

*Any municipal official or employee may register for these events; however, only elected officials will be awarded credit hours in the Certified Municipal Official Program. *CMO credit hours awarded for in-person attendance.*



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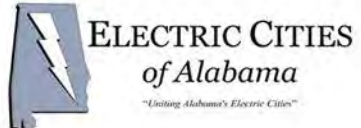
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Ex Officio voting members of the Board of Directors (Active Past Presidents)

- Mayor Gary Fuller, Opelika
- Mayor Leigh Dollar, Guntersville
- Mayor Ronnie Marks, Athens
- Councilmember Jesse Matthews, Bessemer
- Mayor Howard Rubenstein, Saraland
- Mayor Phil Segraves, Guin
- Councilmember Sadie Britt, Lincoln
- Mayor Walt Maddox, Tuscaloosa
- Mayor Charles Murphy, Robertsdale
- Mayor Lew Watson, Lincoln
- Councilmember Johnny Ford, Tuskegee
- Councilmember Harold Swearingen, Pine Hill

STANDING COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP

State and Federal Legislation:

Chair: Mayor Mark Saliba, Dothan (2021)
Vice Chair: CM Ruthie Campbell, Robertsdale

Finance, Administration & Intergovernmental Relations:

Chair: CM Charles Black, Priceville (2021)
Vice Chair: CM Jennifer Williams Smith, Jasper

Energy, Environment and Natural Resources:

Chair: Mayor Ashley Curry, Vestavia Hills (2022)
Vice Chair: CM Ron Mason, Butler



Clarence Anthony, President and CEO of the National League of Cities (left), presented Executive Director Greg Cochran with the John G. Stutz State League Service Award from NLC for working for the Alabama League of Municipalities for 25 years or more. This award is presented by NLC to League employees throughout the nation with 25 years of service and is named for the founder of the national organization. Also pictured is ALM President Mayor Tony Haygood of Tuskegee.

Community and Economic Development:

Chair: CM Joe Watson, Brewton (2022)
Vice Chair: Mayor Randy Garrison, Hartselle

Public Safety

Chair: CM Jerry Starnes, Prattville (2021)
Vice Chair: CM Michael Ellis, Lafayette

Transportation, Infrastructure and Communications:

Chair: CM Michael Gay, Millbrook (2021)
Vice Chair: Mayor Tab Bowling, Decatur

Human Development:

Chair: Mayor Carol Barfield, Ashford (2021)
Vice Chair: Mayor Ron Anders, Auburn

After the reading of the nominations committee report, President Fuller asked if there were any nomination from the floor. Seeing none, he stated that unless there was an objection, he declared the nominations closed. There were no objections.

Councilmember Johnny Ford, Tuskegee and Mayor Gary Fuller, Opelika, moved for the adoption of the Nominating Committee Report as presented. Councilmember Orlando Whitehead, Tuskegee and Councilmember Michael Gay, Millbrook, seconded the motion. There being no objection to the motions from the floor, the motion passed unanimously. The President declared all officers elected.

President Fuller congratulated Mayor Haygood and the other officials elected to serve the League and called upon Mayor Haygood to make remarks to the membership. Mayor Haygood thanked the membership for allowing him the honor of serving as the League President. *A full copy of Mayor Haygood's acceptance speech is on page 9.*

After his speech, Mayor Haygood called upon the League's special guest, Clarence Anthony, President and CEO of the National League of Cities. Upon the conclusion of his remarks to the membership, President Haygood called on Greg Cochran for announcements. Greg Cochran recognized the League's strategic and community partners and reminded the membership about the Tailgate party at the Zone in Bryant Denny Stadium followed by the always popular Roundtable discussions at 2:00 p.m. He also reminded the membership about the President's reception scheduled for Friday, May 13th in the Seller's Auditorium of the Bryant Conference Center.

There being no further business, President Haygood officially adjourned the meeting. ■

Lori Lein, General Counsel, Acting Secretary

critical information to cities and towns regarding how ARPA funds can be used. And, as the Omicron variant reared its ugly head, staff doubled down to ensure we were fully engaged while continuing to offer in-person meetings and regional training. In fact, they successfully launched a new League program this past Fall – the Economic Development Academy that 30 cities and towns are currently going through – while working diligently to bring the long-standing, statewide Alabama Communities of Excellence program under the League’s umbrella. You’ll hear much more about this worthy endeavor in the coming weeks. I applaud our outstanding staff for their continual efforts on behalf of all our communities!

Leadership is not stagnant, folks.

If it is, it’s not working.

During the worst days of the pandemic, regardless of the circumstances, we continued to lead in our hometowns. Facing workforce shortages, rising prices and supply chain disruptions, we have continued to lead in our hometowns. We all know that municipalities can’t shut down. *Every* day our cities and towns are expected to provide essential services. It’s not an option. So, from infrastructure to public safety, our municipal employees continue to stay the course. And we continue to lead because, as servant leaders, we are not only charged with the vitality of our communities but

with making complicated and difficult decisions in the best interest of our citizens.

Municipal officials understand that local government is the framework that supports and protects our cities and towns and that municipalities are the foundation of Alabama’s economy.

As we continue to carefully deliberate how to best invest ARPA funding within our communities – and as our state leaders begin infrastructure expansions and broadband improvements throughout Alabama – our League staff will continue to research best practices and offer guidance to ensure we adhere to mandatory federal regulations, deadlines and legal frameworks. Our staff will also stand with us as we face continued supply chain disruptions, workforce shortages and rising prices.

On behalf of the entire membership, I thank the League’s staff for their dedication to us; to municipal government; and to the health and vitality of our cities and towns.

I also humbly thank you for your leadership and service to your communities.

It has been an honor to preside over our League as we’ve continued to expand services while evolving and adapting to overcome unique and difficult circumstances. I know our organization is in an excellent position to represent us and will continue to do so regardless of what challenges lie ahead.

God bless you and your communities. ■



Executive Director Greg Cochran (left) and ALM President Mayor Tony Haygood of Tuskegee (right) present Immediate Past President Mayor Gary Fuller of Opelika with a plaque acknowledging his service to ALM.



2022 Convention Sponsors, Break Sponsors and EXPO Exhibitors

The League thanks the following Convention Sponsors:



The League thanks the following Break Sponsors:

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The League also thanks our EXPO Exhibitors:

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 AAMCA
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 AL Plumbers & Gas Fitters Examining Board
 Alabama 811
 Alabama Association of Regional Councils
 Alabama Attorney General's Office
 Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition
 Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE)
 Alabama Community College System
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AL Dept. of Environmental Management (ADEM)
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 AL Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve
 Alabama First Responders Benefits Program (ALFRBP)
 Alabama Industries for the Blind
 Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association
 Alabama Municipal Funding Corporation (AMFund)
 Alabama Municipal Insurance Corporation (AMIC)
 Alabama Municipal Revenue Officers Association
 Alabama Power
 Alabama Recreation and Parks Association
 Alabama SBDC Network



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 Lathan Architects
 LeafFilter North of Alabama, LLC
 Lighting Solutions of Alabama
 Living Water Services
 Local Government Health Insurance Board
 MASA MTS
 Multi-Skill Training Services
 Municipal Intercept Services, LLC (MIS)
 Municipal Workers Compensation Fund (MWCF)
 Musco Sports Lighting
 NAFECO
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YES, WE CAN!

May 11 General Session Keynote • Tuscaloosa

Brittany Wagner • Academic Athletic Counselor,
Author and Motivational Speaker

As an Athletic Academic Counselor with more than 15 years of experience in college athletics, there have been hundreds of inspiring stories from the athletes I have worked with. When I became a motivational speaker, I wasn't expecting to add to that list. I have now met amazing people all over the United States with heartfelt, genuine stories that have changed me at my core. The tiny town of Grandfalls, Texas, led me to one of my favorites that I write about in my book, *Next Chance You: Tools, Tips and Tough Love for Bringing Your A-Game to Life*.

Grandfalls, Texas, is 40 miles outside Odessa with a population of about 400. The only thing separating Odessa from Grandfalls is miles and miles of rich oil fields. While these fields produce millions of dollars' worth of oil each year, the median income in Grandfalls is only \$20,000.

I fought back tears as I drove around the town and saw the living conditions of many of the students I was about to meet. They didn't have much; some didn't even have hot water or enough food to eat. There was no grocery store, police station or public maintenance crew in the town.

Grandfalls' bright spot was its new high school building that rose up out of nowhere – a shiny fixture in a desolate landscape. The building itself was pretty, but the people inside were *beautiful*. I spent the day with the children, teachers and staff at the school. I heard their stories of struggle and also witnessed their smiles and enthusiasm, despite that struggle. They were hungry for inspiration and wisdom and longing for someone to *see* them.

Grandfalls, like so many Texas towns, is known for its Friday Night Lights, and that year their football team had made it to the second round of the Texas high school playoffs. While the high school team was impressive, it was a middle school athlete that inspired me the most. His name was Nathan, and he was a middle school student with cerebral palsy. Nathan told me, smiling from ear to ear, that he had recently scored a touchdown at his middle school football game. Despite his disability, his parents had raised him with one rule – there were two words he wasn't allowed to say: *I can't*.

Later that day, I saw the amazing video footage of Nathan crossing the endzone. He started out mid-field with his support crutches. About 10 yards in, he dropped the crutches and took off walking on his own down the field. As soon as his teammates realized what was happening, they swooped in, acting like crutches to keep him going. Suddenly, the wall of defenders on the opposing team opened up and began clapping. Everyone on the field and in the stands was mesmerized watching Nathan conquer his disability with a sharp focus on the goal line. When he made it into the endzone, he turned to see his peers (and opponents) on the field celebrating his touchdown more than he celebrated it himself.

Nathan, his teammates, his coaches and teachers, his impoverished town of Grandfalls shared a lesson we all need to learn: *Yes, we can!*

Most people would look at Nathan and see a deficit. They would look at Grandfalls, Texas, and see a lack of opportunity. How could a teen like Nathan have much hope of succeeding in life?

In watching that video, I realized two key components contributed to Nathan's success that day: his "I can" attitude and the support of those around him. He wasn't even allowed to mutter the opposite word "can't" thus creating a focus on what *is* possible. He spoke the possibility right into existence. It was his words that became his attitude and eventually his belief that he could, indeed, do it – whatever "it" was. He didn't know he was going to drop his crutches that day, and neither did his teammates. But as he started on the journey with the words *I can* repeatedly running through his mind, he was inspired to do so – by his own belief that he could.



I think all of us are constantly looking at our lives and situations and evaluating our chances of success. Sometimes we use the seemingly negative strikes against us as an excuse not to try. We quit because of how much there is to overcome. We give up on a dream because *today* it seems overwhelming. How will we ever get to the endzone? But if we shifted our focus and our belief, if we broadened our perspective, we would see how many opportunities surround us every day. Our resources are rarely as limited as they feel.

The secret lies in having the right perspective. When we see how far we have to go, or how many hurdles we have to cross, we can get bogged down and discouraged. In the midst of the storm, we forget to pause and focus on what lies directly in front of us. When we do that, we see the crutches and the cheerleaders.

Even with the right perspective, the goal in front of us will require effort. That's when refusing to allow negative thoughts to control us will help us mentally forge ahead. Focusing on the potential opportunities instead of the obstacles helps us stay sane and inspires our self-confidence. Action is still required. Perspective does not cancel out the need for effort.

Nathan didn't know what would happen. He hadn't made sure his teammates would help him if he couldn't finish the race by himself. He just trusted the process. And when he began to falter, they swooped in. They didn't pick him up and carry him, although, I think they would have. Instead, some supported him physically, acting as his crutch. Others supported him mentally by cheering him to the finish line. Both were crucial to his success.

At first glance, Nathan's glass may appear half empty; however, with community support and a positive attitude, he is holding the pitcher. The hurdles themselves are irrelevant when we house the ability to overcome them. We, as leaders in our communities, are holding the pitcher! In our communities we have the crutches *and* the cheerleaders. We have the knowledge, the wherewithal, to overcome hurdles. Its oftentimes our own lack of perspective, lack of belief and unwillingness to accept help that holds us back. In order to give our communities a chance, we need to be more like Nathan. As leaders, we are the chosen ones to scream: **YES, WE CAN!** ■



Brittany Wagner is a nationally respected athletic academic counselor and motivational speaker best known for her role as the breakout star of the hit Netflix documentary series, Last Chance U. Recognized for her compassion, encouragement and no-nonsense attitude, Brittany guided many young men to academic and professional success despite run-ins with the law, extreme poverty, abandonment and often a complete lack of academic preparedness. She has helped more than 200 football players academically qualify for nationally respected NCAA Division I schools, and all the students Brittany advised who are currently playing in the NFL also hold college degrees. Brittany's inadvertent stardom led to feature interviews with Good Morning America, ABC's Nightline, The Dan Patrick Show, The New York Times, and Sports Illustrated – to name a few. For the past five years, Brittany has traveled all over the country as a motivational speaker. In the fall of 2017, she launched her own company, Ten Thousand Pencils (10KP). Through 10KP, she aids at-risk youth by working individually with high school and college-level administrators, counselors and teachers to help them build relationships with these students and better support their emotional, social and academic needs. Brittany's first book: Next Chance

You: Tools, Tips and Tough Love for Bringing Your A-Game to Life was published in September of 2021. She earned both her undergraduate and graduate degrees in Sports Communication and Administration from Mississippi State University and is currently a professor in the College of Business at The University of Montevallo. She resides in Birmingham, Alabama with her teenage daughter, Kennedy, and their dog, Ollie. To contact Brittany, visit brittanywagner.com.







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