

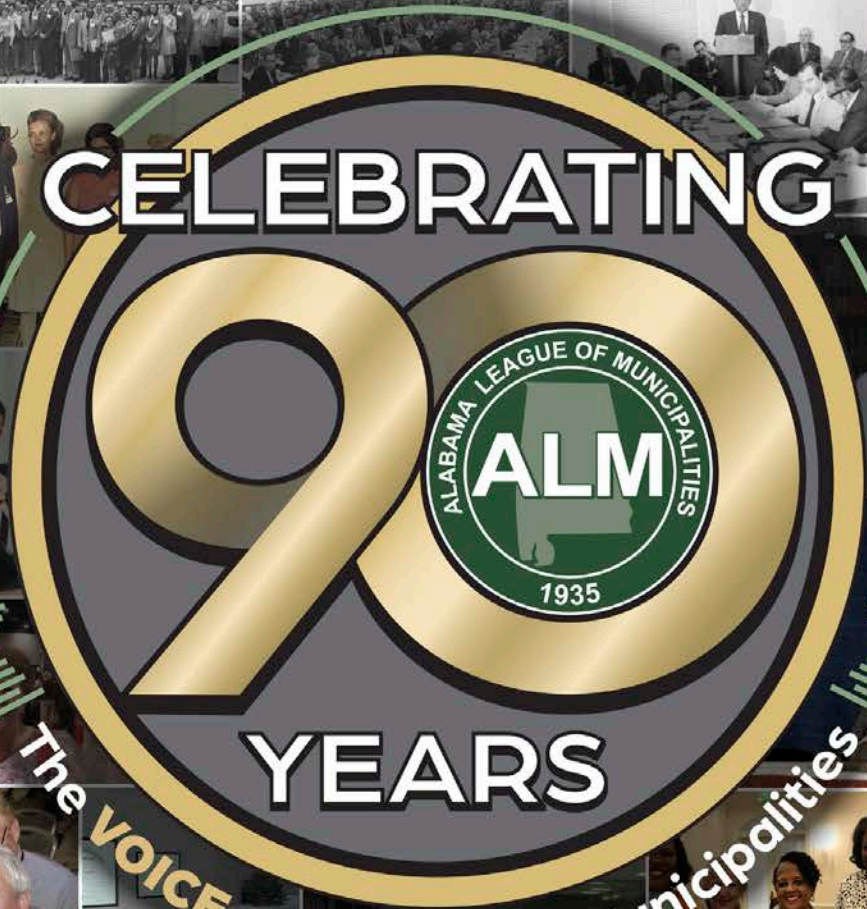
The Alabama

# MUNICIPAL

Official publication of the Alabama League of Municipalities

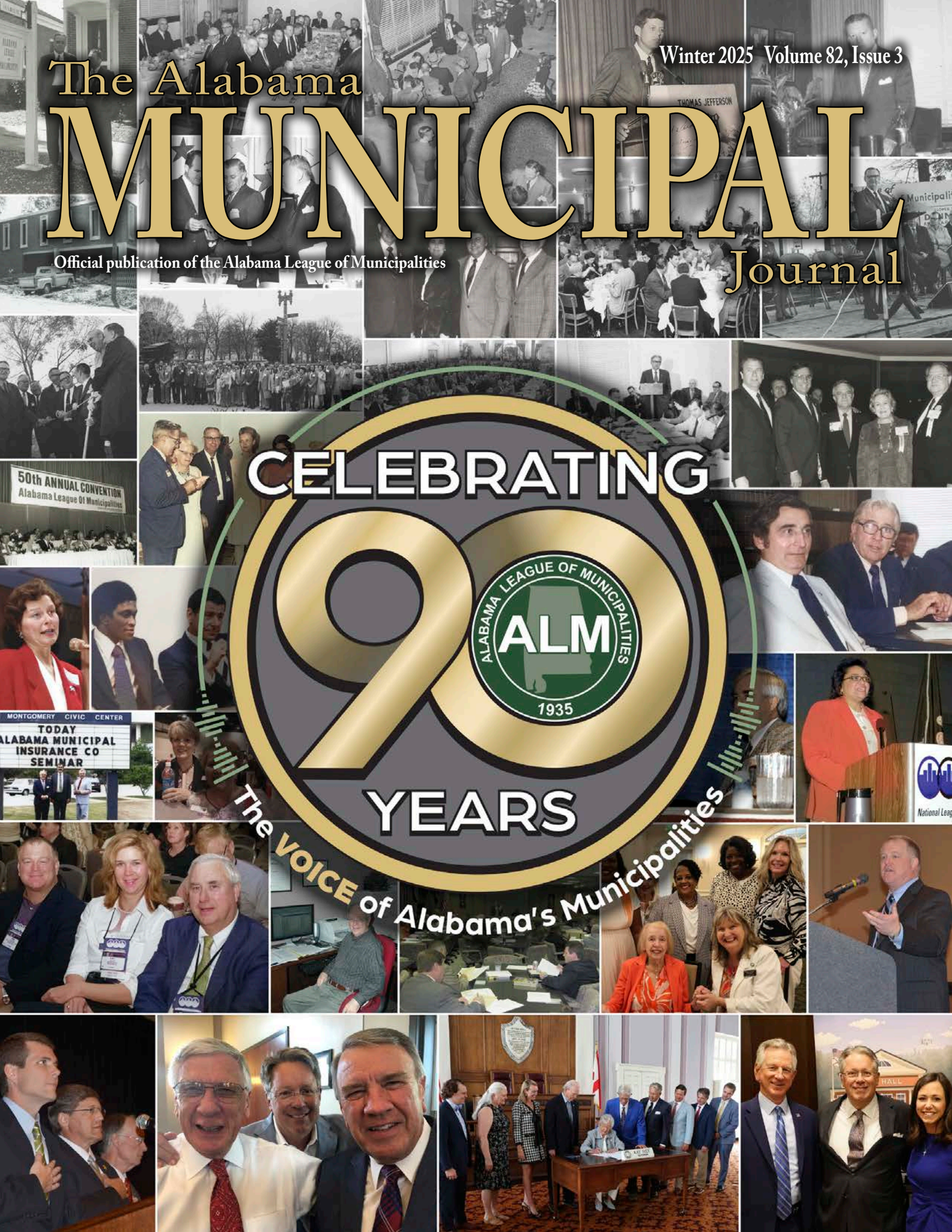
# Journal

## CELEBRATING



## YEARS

The VOICE of Alabama's Municipalities





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# About ALM:

The Alabama League of Municipalities is a nonpartisan membership association of over 450 incorporated cities and towns. Since 1935, the League has worked to strengthen municipal government through advocacy, training and the advancement of effective local leadership. As the recognized voice of Alabama's cities and towns, ALM's member municipalities benefit from a variety of member programs, services and activities that are impossible to accomplish alone.



## Go Digital!



Scan the QR code to see e-versions of *The Alabama Municipal Journal* available online. Between editions, keep up with ALM's daily activities via our social media channels. Photos from League events are also available for viewing and downloading on our Flickr page.



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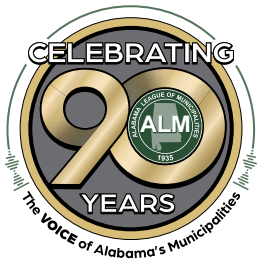


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# The Alabama MUNICIPAL Journal

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## In this Issue:

Executive Director's Report ..... 5

Leadership Perspective ..... 7-8

Opt In to ALM's Text Messaging Service ..... 9

Live Locally Alabama: Support Your Community ..... 10

Legal Viewpoint: 2025 Reporting Deadlines ..... 11

Over 100 Municipal Officials Graduate from Certified Municipal Official Program ..... 15

ALM Announces 2024 Class of Alabama Communities of Excellence and STAR Award Honorees ..... 20

ALM Celebrates Third Class of EDA Graduates ..... 23

City of Helena Awarded First Healthy Alabama Community Designation for Trailblazing Efforts to Support Healthy Lifestyles ..... 26

Building a Bright Future: How Semmes is Leveraging EDA Strategies as a Young City ..... 40

ACE Spotlight: Arab, Alabama: Reviving the Spirit of Its Founders in Modern Growth ..... 43

NLC Congressional City Conference - Alabama Agenda ..... 47

Volkert Celebrates a Century of Integrity in Infrastructure ..... 48

Strengthening Municipal Health: A Partnership Between Local Gov Health + Wellness and the Alabama League of Municipalities ..... 50

Upcoming League Training Calendar ..... 52

The League Team Welcomes New Staff ..... 53

Identifying and Mitigating Buckets of Risk in Municipal Government ..... 54

Cybersecurity Resources for Alabama Communities ..... 56

Your Town Alabama 2025 Workshop ..... 59

### 2025 Legislative Feature

The Alabama Legislative Process ..... 30

Gov. Kay Ivey ..... 34

Lt. Gov. Will Ainsworth ..... 35

Senate Pro Tem Garlan Gudger ..... 36

House Speaker Nathaniel Ledbetter ..... 37

Q&A With U.S. Representative Shomari Figures ..... 38



## On the Cover:

*This year, the Alabama League of Municipalities will proudly celebrate our 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary on May 15, 2025! Since our inception, the League has worked to strengthen municipal government through advocacy, training and the advancement of effective local leadership. Representing more than 450 municipalities, we have created several programs over the past nine decades to better serve our communities. We invite you to visit [almonline.org](http://almonline.org) to learn more about how you can participate in them and upcoming events. Original design created by Karl Franklin.*



# Insuring the Future of Local Government



Is *YOUR* Future Covered?

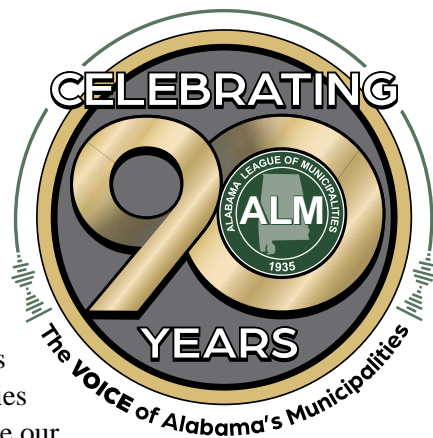
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1-866-239-2642 (AMIC)



# 2025: Celebrating 90 Years of Service and Preparing for an Eventful Year

Gregory D. Cochran • Executive Director



**W**e are excited for 2025, as we will celebrate our 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary as an association representing municipal governments across Alabama.

In 1935, the Alabama Legislature created the Alabama League of Municipalities to represent the needs of municipal governments and to be the voice of our communities across our state. Since our inception, we have created several programs to better serve our communities:

- **1942:** Municipal Revenue Services (MRS), to identify past-due insurance premium taxes
- **1976:** Municipal Workers' Compensation Fund (MWCF), to provide municipal employees with workers' compensation coverage
- **1989:** Alabama Municipal Insurance Corporation (AMIC), to provide general liability insurance coverage
- **2002:** AMIC and MWCF created a joint Loss Control Division to provide additional staff and expanded services, including on-site risk management and regional training programs at a much-reduced cost to their members
- **2006:** Alabama Municipal Funding Corporation (AMFund), to assist municipalities with low-cost financing
- **2015:** Municipal Intercept Program (MIS), to capture fines and fees owed to municipalities
- **2021:** Economic Development Academy (EDA), to provide guidance on best practices for recruiting economic investment
- **2022:** Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE), to provide strategic and comprehensive planning resources to communities with populations from 2,000 to 18,000

Each of these programs was intentionally created to provide our municipalities with the best resources and tools for administering good governance in their communities.

During the 2024 legislative session, our team supported legislation mandating training minimums for municipal officials. This training is designed to provide our officials with the foundations of municipal government. The training will be available to our members during our conferences and online through our partnership with the Alabama Community College System. The online training portal will elevate how we deliver resources and tools to our members, along with





providing 24/7 access to training materials. We appreciate Chancellor Jimmy Baker and his team for their partnership and commitment to strengthening our communities.

As we look ahead to the many conferences and events this year holds, our team is working intentionally to ensure we deliver quality content and resources to you. During our Advocacy Day on Wednesday, Feb. 12, we have invited Lt. Gov. Will Ainsworth, Senate Pro Tem Garland Gudger and House Speaker Nathaniel Ledbetter to join us at the Montgomery Renaissance to share their perspectives on the upcoming session, along with their legislative priorities. This event will also feature two important panel discussions on health care and public safety.



In March, we will travel to Washington D.C. for the NLC Congressional Cities Conference to network with our federal counterparts and Alabama’s congressional delegation. During the event, ALM will host a caucus meeting and reception for delegates in attendance and has invited our U.S. representatives to join their constituents for dinner in their respective district, as well as U.S. Sen. Tommy Tuberville and Sen. Katie Britt for breakfast with constituents. This is always an excellent opportunity to engage with our congressional delegation to express local needs for federal funding of public projects and regional infrastructure investments. Registration for dinner and breakfast is separate from your registration through NLC.

We will host our annual convention on May 13-16 in Huntsville, where we are planning the agenda with outstanding speakers and networking opportunities for our delegates. We have already reserved the Black Jacket Symphony band to entertain our members on closing night.

Furthermore, since it is an election year for most of our members, we will host four regional orientation workshops in the fall for newly elected **AND** seasoned municipal officials. The training will take place on the following dates and locations:

- **Tuscaloosa:** Oct. 1-2
- **Montgomery:** Oct. 29-30
- **Huntsville:** Nov. 5-6
- **Daphne:** Nov. 12-13

These day-and-a-half workshops are designed to train newly elected officials on ethics, financial stability, reporting guidelines, roles of the mayor and council and other invaluable topics.

As you can see, your ALM staff is committed to providing you with all the tools and resources needed to lead your municipality. We appreciate your commitment and support of our association. ■

Peace be with you,  
Gregory D. Cochran, CAE  
Executive Director





# Leadership Perspective

Mayor Mark Saliba • Dothan • ALM President



**H**appy New Year! In the words of Alecia Beth Moore Hart (Pink), let's "Get the Party Started!"

I am excited about the possibilities for ALM in 2025! I do believe that ALM serves as the "Voice of Alabama's Local Governments in the State House and in Congress," and we need to let that collective voice be heard.

Henry Ross Perot, a billionaire and fiery Texas politician, ran two campaigns as an independent in 1992 and 1996. He once said, "One voice is tiny, and alone it cannot be heard above the din of politics as usual. The peoples voice, when it cries as one, is a great roar."

This brings my rambling to just how important your participation is at Advocacy Day on February 12. A great day is planned with a panel on the state of health care in Alabama, which is a shared interest expressed in all of our cities. There will also be a public safety panel and an opportunity to hear from our leadership in the House and Senate. Please make every effort to be there; it will be worth your time.

I also recommend you stay plugged in to our State House Advocate and sign up to receive text messages on League communications. The legislative sessions are fast and furious and can change overnight! I know that I am preaching to the choir, but we all know that what is passed each session has a tremendous effect on our towns and cities in our great state of Alabama.

Many blessings to each of you! ■

## CHAIRS OF THE LEAGUE'S STANDING COMMITTEES

### **Committee on State and Federal Legislation**

Charles Black - *Councilmember, Priceville, Chair*  
Joe Taylor - *Mayor, Rainbow City, Vice Chair*

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Sheldon Day - *Mayor, Thomasville, Chair*  
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### **Committee on Transportation, Infrastructure and Communication (TIC)**

Tab Bowling - *Mayor, Decatur, Chair*  
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### **Committee on Public Safety (PS)**

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### **Committee on Community and Economic Development (CED)**

Brian Puckett - *Mayor, Helena, Chair*  
Newton Cromer - *Councilmember, Saraland, Vice Chair*

Scan the QR code for more information about these Committees on the League's Officers and Committees page.





# Leadership Perspective

Mayor Sherry Sullivan • Fairhope • ALM Vice President



**H**appy New Year! I trust that you all had a wonderful holiday season and are looking ahead to a promising 2025. This year holds great significance for all of us, not only because of the potential for progress in our communities, but also because it marks an election year.

Reflecting on the past year, it was fantastic to see so many of you at the Municipal Leadership Institute in November in Orange Beach. The event was a wonderful opportunity for us to engage with regional and statewide experts on crucial topics like artificial intelligence (AI), workforce development, and other key areas aimed at improving the quality of life in our communities. More than just learning, it was a chance to build lasting relationships with fellow elected officials—something that is invaluable to our collective growth.

As Mayor Saliba and I stood on stage congratulating many of you on your Certified Municipal Official (CMO) designation, I was reminded of the dedication each of you demonstrates in service to your communities. It is no small feat to put in the extra hours of training necessary to elevate your leadership skills and make your community a better place. I hope your constituents truly appreciate the sacrifices and commitment that come with this work, and I want to personally commend each of you for your unwavering service.

Looking ahead to our legislative priorities, I'm excited to share that the League has already begun work on this year's legislative agenda. In October, the legislative committee, the executive board, and other key groups met to identify important topics that will shape our discussions this year. Among the issues on the agenda are economic development, education, the bid law and mental health. With the Alabama legislative session kicking off soon, I encourage you all to engage and advocate for these issues that matter so much to our communities.

To further our advocacy efforts, the League will host Advocacy Day in Montgomery on February 12. This will be a prime opportunity for all of us to learn more about the legislative session and help educate our lawmakers on the critical issues affecting our municipalities. It's also a reminder that our collective voice is powerful, and together, we can make a significant impact.

Later this spring, we will gather once again for the National League of Cities's (NLC) Congressional City Conference, held in Washington, D.C. from March 8-12. This conference will offer you a chance to connect with federal officials, advocate for local priorities and tap into valuable NLC services and benefits. Hill Day at the conference will allow us to directly engage with lawmakers, ensuring our communities are represented at the federal level. It is also an excellent chance to network with municipal leaders from across the country and share insights and strategies for tackling shared challenges.

This year also marks an exciting time for our state's representation in Washington. We are eager to welcome Congressman Barry Moore to his new role representing Alabama's first congressional district, as well as Congressman Shomari Figures, who will be starting his first term representing Alabama's second congressional district. I look forward to seeing both of them work alongside us in advancing our state's needs on the national stage.

As we begin this year, I am excited to see where it takes us. I look forward to seeing many of you at Advocacy Day in Montgomery or at the Congressional City Conference in D.C. Together, we will continue to advocate for our communities, strengthen our leadership and make 2025 a year of great success for our municipalities. ■

Be sure to read the *State House Advocate* on Fridays during the Legislative Session.

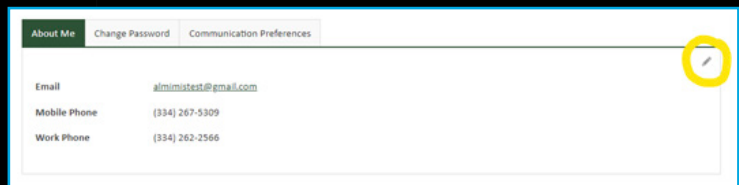
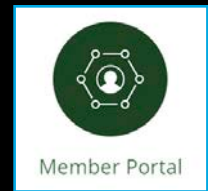
STATE HOUSE  
ADVOCATE

This Week in League Advocacy

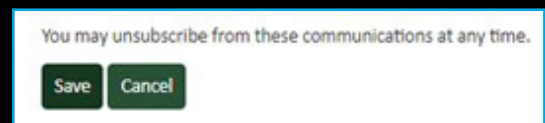
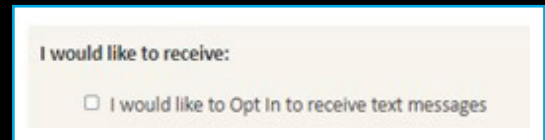


# Opt In to ALM's New Text Messaging Service

1. Go to ALM's website <https://almonline.org>
2. Click on the **Member Portal** icon and type in your username and password.
3. Verify that your Mobile Phone number is listed in the mobile phone field.
4. If your mobile phone number is missing from the **About Me** tab, click the pencil in the top right-hand corner. Enter your number, then click Save.



5. Click on the **Communications Preferences** tab to see the list of communication options.
6. Select "I would like to Opt In to receive text messages" from the options, then click Save.
7. You have now opted in to receive text messages and will receive a Welcome text message within 24 hours. You can sign out of your account now.



**Congratulations! Welcome to the ALM text alert system!**





## Support your Community

### How does local government support your community?

Through a variety of ways and services including public safety, recruitment of economic investment, infrastructure maintenance and sustainability, economic development, recreation, education, arts, festivals and cultural events.

### How can YOU support your community?

Citizens can get involved by attending council meetings and community events; engaging in elections; building relationships with local and state leaders; volunteering; and participating in community initiatives and improvement projects.

## Live locally to support Alabama!

Scan below to find out more!



### Eat Locally, Shop Locally

Alabama is home to countless local artisans and natural resources that support local economies. When you shop and eat locally, you promote sustainable economic growth for communities.



### Live Locally, Work Locally

Employment levels have reached new highs, and Alabama companies have hit records for exports. Local leaders continue to connect with local businesses and state leaders to enhance our workforce development efforts to support high-paying manufacturing jobs, aerospace and defense opportunities, automotive industry jobs and maritime careers.



### Live Locally, Learn Locally

Education is the key to opportunity. Alabama is home to the No. 1 pre-K program in the nation. Alabama also has 30 four-year colleges and universities, 26 two-year technical and junior colleges and over 140 school districts for K-12 students.



### Live Locally, Play Locally

Whether you're visiting white sandy beaches, fishing, hunting, hiking, immersing yourself in the cultural arts and history scene, or attending an energetic sports game - Alabama has an abundance of activities and entertainment that are sure to provide a good time!

# LEGAL VIEWPOINT

By Mary Elizabeth Dial, Associate Counsel, ALM

## 2025 Reporting Deadlines

Each year, municipalities must report a myriad of information to various state government entities, and failing to do so can have serious consequences. However, with all of the other responsibilities municipalities need to fulfill, it can be difficult to remember every important deadline.

This article will hopefully simplify this nebulous set of rules and regulations by laying out, simply and concisely, what is required of whom and when. The reporting requirements are presented here according to their topic, but if you need a chronological list of reporting deadlines, you can also refer to the League's 2025 Municipal Reporting Guide available at [almonline.org](http://almonline.org).

### Rebuild Alabama Act Reporting Requirements

#### Annual Transportation Plan

Pursuant to Section 23-8-8(d), Code of Alabama 1975, each municipality is required to adopt and report on an annual transportation plan. This plan should include a detailed list of road and bridge projects the municipality intends to undertake during the next fiscal year using the funding it expects to receive under the Rebuild Alabama Act. This plan must be presented to and adopted by the municipal governing body on or before **August 31**.

After the governing body adopts the plan, it must be made available to the public. The municipality must post the plan on the municipality's official website, if it has one, and in conspicuous places in various municipal buildings, such as the city or town hall, the mayor's office and the municipal highway department. As is always the case with public notice requirements, this statute sets a floor, not a ceiling; the municipality can post the plan in any other public space that the governing body feels is appropriate, so long as the basic requirements are met.

Then, at **the first meeting of the municipal governing body in January**, the municipal engineer (or any other individual designated by the governing body) must present a report on the transportation plan to the governing

body, pursuant to Section 23-8-8(e), Code of Alabama 1975. This report should update the governing body on the status of the municipality's gasoline and diesel excise tax fund and the status of any projects outlined in the current transportation plan. That report will be entered into the minutes of that meeting. It must also be made available to the public, which can be done by posting it on the municipality's website.

#### Contractor Report

Pursuant to Section 23-8-6(a), Code of Alabama 1975, any municipality that has awarded contracts for projects using Rebuild Alabama Act funds must compile a list of all the contractors to whom it has awarded those contracts. This list must then be submitted to the president pro tempore of the Alabama Senate, the speaker of the Alabama House of Representatives and the chair of the Legislature's Joint Transportation Committee. This list must be submitted on or before **October 1**.





## Bid and Notification of Project Completion

Pursuant to Section 23-8-6(b), Code of Alabama 1975, a municipality must publish the plans and the bid opening date for any projects using Rebuild Alabama Act funds to the website maintained by the Alabama League of Municipalities and the Alabama Transportation Institute (*Scan QR code*) so that they are accessible to the public. The municipality must publish this information on the website on or before **the tenth day of the month preceding the opening date for bids**.



Once a project has been completed, Section 39-1-1, Code of Alabama 1975, requires that the contractor publish notice of the completed project. The contractor may satisfy that requirement by posting notice to the same website maintained by the League, according to Section 23-8-6(d), Code of Alabama 1975. Keep in mind that this is just a helpful tip that the municipality can share with its contractors, and not a requirement that the municipality itself has to fulfill.

## Collection of Revenue

### Local Motor Fuels Report

Any municipality that is required to report local motor fuel excise tax rate information to the Alabama Department of Revenue (ALDOR) is also required by Section 29-2-4(a), Code of Alabama 1975, to submit a report to ALDOR detailing the total amount of local motor fuel excise tax revenues the municipality collected for the previous fiscal year, and the total amount of the revenues the municipality spent on road and bridge maintenance during that same fiscal year. The municipality must submit this report to the ALDOR's Business and License Tax Division, motor fuels section, on or before **January 31**.

### Police Jurisdiction Report

Pursuant to Section 11-51-91(c), Code of Alabama 1975, any municipality that collects license revenue and any other taxes or fees in its police jurisdiction is required to submit a report to the Alabama Department of Examiners of Public Accounts detailing all license revenues and other taxes or fees collected in the police jurisdiction during the previous year. The report should also include a list of all the services provided by the municipality, and a list of the providers of those services within the police jurisdiction.

If the municipality provides police or fire protection in its police jurisdiction, then it will need to include the total annual budget for each of its police and fire departments in its municipal limits. It will also need to include the total number of calls that its police departments and fire departments responded to, and the number of citations they issued and

arrests they made; this information should show how many of those responses were to calls inside the municipal limits, and how many were to calls in the police jurisdiction. The municipality must submit this report to the department on or before **March 1**, and make the report available to the public.

A municipality that fails to complete this report will face financial penalties. If this report is not submitted, the Alabama Department of Examiners of Public Accounts will work with the Alabama Department of Revenue to prohibit the municipality from collecting license revenue or any other taxes or fees in its police jurisdiction. The Legislative Committee on Public Accounts may also order an audit of any municipality collecting revenue in its police jurisdiction. If a municipality is found not to have submitted this report as required, it may be required to pay the cost of the audit.

## Law Enforcement and the Courts

### Sexual Assault Cases Report

Every law enforcement agency in the state of Alabama, including municipal law enforcement, is required by Section 41-27-13, Code of Alabama 1975, to report information about sexual assault cases to the Alabama State Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA) on or before **April 1**.

This report must include the following information from the previous calendar year: the number of new sexual assault cases reported; the number of new sexual assault cases reported where evidence from a medical forensic examination was submitted for forensic analysis; the number of sexual assault cases reported where evidence from a medical forensic examination was *not* submitted for forensic analysis, and the reason that evidence was not submitted; and the number of sexual assault cases that were closed due to judicial or investigative reasons, and the reasons those cases were closed.

ALEA will then provide that information to the chairs of the Alabama House and Senate judiciary committees. If any municipality's law enforcement has failed to submit this report, that municipality's name and contact information will also be provided to these committees.

### Annual Municipal Court Fees and Fines Report

Pursuant to Sections 12-14-110 – 12-14-114, Code of Alabama 1975, the municipal court clerk must submit a report to the Alabama Administrative Office of Courts on or before **December 1** detailing the following information: the total court cases for the fiscal year, according to the court's case management system; the total amount of revenue collected by the municipal court, the amount dispersed to different municipal entities, and how much revenue each of those entities received; the court's total expenditures,

including annual salaries for the court’s judge(s), clerk, and magistrate(s); the court’s total annual operating budget; and the municipality’s total annual operating budget.

If any municipal court fails to provide this information, that failure will be recorded and reported on the website of the Alabama Administrative Office of Courts. That court will also forfeit any fees and costs it collects, that it would otherwise keep or distribute to the municipality, until the report is submitted, and will be subject to an audit which the municipality may be required to pay for.

### Monthly Municipal Court Fees and Fines Report

The municipal court clerk must submit a report **each month** to the state comptroller, detailing the total amounts of fines, trial tax, district attorney fees and other fees that were collected the previous month. This report should be submitted electronically via the state comptroller’s website (*Scan the QR code*), and in hard copy to the state comptroller’s office. The court clerk must also provide a second copy of the completed form to the county commission and keep a third copy for their own records.



If a municipal court fails to submit this report, it will forfeit any fees and costs it collects, that it would otherwise keep or distribute to the municipality.

### Other Reporting Requirements

#### Statement of Economic Interests

Pursuant to Section 36-25-14, Code of Alabama 1975, certain people who work in or with state and local government must submit a statement of economic interests form to the Alabama Ethics Commission. This statement must be filed with the commission on or before **April 30** and should reflect the individual’s economic interests during the preceding calendar year.

All elected municipal officials are required to submit a statement of economic interests, as are several different categories of appointed officers and municipal employees, depending on their job title and/or annual salary. The full list of people who must file a statement of economic interests can be found in Section 36-25-14(a), Code of Alabama 1975, and includes public employees who earn a base salary of more than \$75,000 per year and employees who supervise other employees. Any candidate running for municipal office must also file a statement of economic interests when they file to qualify for an upcoming election.

Any person who is unsure whether they are required to submit a statement of economic interests can contact the Alabama Ethics Commission for guidance at [sei@ethics.alabama.gov](mailto:sei@ethics.alabama.gov).

### Municipal Audit

Each municipality must conduct an annual audit, using an independent public accountant, covering the fiscal year. The requirements of this audit depend on the municipality’s annual expenditures, as explained in Section 11-43-85, Code of Alabama 1975.

**Within 60 days of receiving the final report of that audit**, the governing body of the municipality must provide a copy of the report to the Alabama Department of Examiners of Public Accounts pursuant to Section 41-5A-12.1, Code of Alabama 1975. If a municipality fails to provide the report, the department may perform its own audit of the municipality and require the municipality to pay any associated costs. If it is determined that the governing body or any individual officer failed to comply with these requirements, that governing body or officer may also be subject to fines.

### Local Highway Finance Report, a.k.a. Form 536

Every two years, all municipalities must submit their completed Form FHWA-536 to the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT). This form documents certain information about the municipality’s receipts, expenditures and activities related to roads and streets. Pursuant to 23 CFR 420.101 – 420.209, ALDOT will submit the information it receives to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). FHWA uses this information to study highway use on the local level and develop the federal government’s plans for highway transportation.

Municipalities must submit their completed Form FHWA-536 to ALDOT on or before **March 31 of every odd-numbered year**.

### Elections Reporting

Beginning at noon on the first Tuesday after a municipal election, the municipal governing body begins the process of canvassing the election results. Pursuant to Section 11-46-55(g), Code of Alabama 1975, the municipal clerk must submit a copy of each certificate of election **within 10 days of the governing body canvassing the election results** to the office of the judge of probate of the county where the city or town hall is located, the Alabama secretary of state’s elections division and the Alabama League of Municipalities.

For more information on any of these reporting requirements and deadlines, including contact information for state government agencies, please refer to the League’s 2025 Municipal Reporting Guide (*Scan the QR code*). If you have questions about fulfilling this important municipal function, you can also contact the League’s Legal Department at (334) 262-2566 or via our website at [www.almonline.org](http://www.almonline.org).





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# Over 100 Municipal Officials Graduate from Certified Municipal Official Program

Lori Jhons • Communications Director • ALM

Over 100 municipal officials graduated or received awards from participating in the Certified Municipal Official (CMO) program at the Alabama League of Municipalities' recognition ceremony on October 30, 2024. Perry Roquemore Jr., ALM's third executive director, delivered the commencement address and shared his enthusiasm for the growth of the program, which was created under his leadership in 1994.


Throughout the year, officials receive formal classroom training, in-person and through online courses, in foundational government operations and best practices to abide by state laws. Municipal officials have the incentive of obtaining three different levels of CMO certification after completing 40, 80 and 120 credit hours of training as well as graduating. This year, 50 certified municipal officials, 45 advanced certified municipal officials and 17 CMO emeriti, earned their respective designations. As of graduation, more than 5,200 municipal officials have attended the League's training in municipal government since its inception.

"We are very proud to have the second oldest elected municipal official training program in the nation, and we are even more excited to celebrate the 30th anniversary of this outstanding program," ALM Executive Director Greg Cochran said. "A major component of the League's mission is to train and prepare our new and veteran, local elected officials with the skills and latest resources needed to help them serve their communities to the best of their abilities."

In celebration of the 30th anniversary of the CMO program, the League awarded 20 officials with its new tiered emeritus lapel pins. On average, it takes five or six years to complete the general requirements for the emeritus certification. CMO emeritus officials that reached between 200 and 299 hours of training obtained the second tier and received a new lapel pin with one green stone, those that reached between 300 and 399 hours obtained the third tier and received a new pin with two green stones; and those that reached over 400 hours obtained the fourth tier and received a new pin with three crystal clear stones.

The League also presented Certified Municipal Achievement (CMA) Awards to 15 municipalities, the most since its inception. The CMA Awards were created in 2018 to honor municipalities where the municipality's mayor and full council obtain at least 40 credit hours individually, if not more, within a year.



Scan the QR code to watch a video honoring the 30th CMO anniversary. 





Cochran added, “We hope these new CMO emeritus tiered levels and the CMA Awards will further incentivize all municipal officials to keep striving for more training!”

During the 2024 Legislative Session, Sen. Jabo Waggoner and Rep. Jim Hill, introduced legislation to the Alabama Legislature to expand the CMO program from a voluntary program to mandated training. Gov. Kay Ivey signed the Alabama Municipal Official Training Act into law on May 3, 2024.

The act specifically requires mayors and councilmembers to complete 10 hours of training annually, provided by ALM, during their first term in office. All elected local officials will be required to receive five hours of training credits annually after receiving the 40 hours required for ALM’s basic CMO certification. The act took effect January 1, 2025. ■

## 2024 Certified Municipal Officials

- Councilmember Melinda Ready Achman, Level Plains
- Mayor Charles Andrews, Monroeville
- Councilmember David W. Bankson, Hokes Bluff
- Councilmember Chris Bath, Millbrook
- Councilmember Will Battles, Hokes Bluff
- Councilmember Joseph Belles, Gurley
- Councilmember Tommy R. Blackmon, Grimes
- Councilmember Lora Lee Boone, Prattville
- Councilmember Nate Brewer, Sylacauga
- Councilmember Jim Clark, Valley
- Councilmember Tony Ebright, Semmes
- Councilmember Gregory Eldridge, Level Plains
- Councilmember Michael C. Ellis, LaFayette
- Mayor Riely Evans Sr., North Courtland
- Councilmember Ashton Fowler, Sylacauga
- Councilmember Shelia Franklin, Florala
- Councilmember Donna Fredrick, Scottsboro
- Councilmember Marcus Hampton, Pennington
- Mayor Chris Hare, Glencoe
- Mayor James Heigl, Sylacauga
- Councilmember Jay Howell, Centre
- Mayor Deborah Hudson, Wilton
- Councilmember Jameson Jenkins, Rainbow City
- Councilmember Wayne Jones, Westover
- Councilmember Ellis Key, Moody
- Councilmember Elaine Knight, Midland City
- Councilmember Lucille Parker Landrum, Coosada
- Mayor Jared N. Lyles, Silverhill
- Councilmember Corey Martin, Fairhope
- Councilmember John W. Massey, Ashford
- Councilmember Erica Baker Norris, Opelika
- Councilmember Jonathan Ray, Margaret
- Councilmember Chuck Robinson, Hokes Bluff
- Mayor Donald Sherrod, Pickensville
- Councilmember Kaytrina Simmons, Florence
- Councilmember Michael Sizemore, Glencoe
- Councilmember Kathy P. Smyth, Luverne
- Councilmember Kathy Snow, Newton
- Councilmember Joseph Sonaty, Leesburg
- Mayor Paul R. South, Jackson
- Mayor Bernard L. Sullivan, Brantley

Scan the QR code to watch a video recapping the 2024 ALM Graduation and Awards Ceremony.



- Councilmember Toney B. Thomas, LaFayette
- Councilmember Matthew Tortorice, Margaret
- Councilmember Cheryl Tucker, Wetumpka
- Councilmember Randy Vice, Rainbow City
- Councilmember Belle Warr, Clayton
- Councilmember Walter B. Watson Jr., Fort Payne
- Councilmember Chris Willis, Helena
- Councilmember Anthony Wright, Hueytown
- Councilmember Maura Wroblewski, Madison

## 2024 Advanced CMOs

- Councilmember Awlahjaday Agee, Clanton
- Mayor Charles Andrews, Monroeville
- Councilmember Carolyn Artis-Brooks, York
- Mayor Danny Baker, Blountsville
- Councilmember Ray Baxley, Blountsville
- Mayor Andrew Betterton, Florence
- Mayor Terry L. Burgett, Nauvoo
- Councilmember Cornelius Burrows, Level Plains
- Councilmember Jerry L. Caylor, Evergreen
- Mayor Roderick Clark, Union Springs
- Councilmember Keith Clay, Southside
- Councilmember Jerry Conway, Brent

- Councilmember Ebonee Copeland, Center Point
- Councilmember Kenneth D. Cost, Calera
- Mayor Ashley C. Curry, Vestavia Hills
- Councilmember Tony Ebright, Semmes
- Councilmember Michael C. Ellis, LaFayette
- Councilmember Bill A. Griffin, Florence
- Councilmember Latisher Hall, Brundidge
- Councilmember Leah Harlow, Ozark
- Mayor Larry Holcomb, Fultondale
- Councilmember Joseph Hutchins, Southside
- Councilmember Lesia James, Selma
- Councilmember Kristi Jennings, Fultondale
- Councilmember Wayne Jones, Westover
- Councilmember Cleophus M. King, Bessemer
- Councilmember Roy L. Madison, Thomasville
- Councilmember John W. Massey, Ashford
- Councilmember Maurice Mercer, Pelham
- Councilmember Marcus Miller, York
- Councilmember Jazmin L. Mitchell, York
- Councilmember Calvin Morgan, Calera
- Mayor Don Nelson, Creola
- Mayor Rod Northam, Fayette
- Mayor Willie M. Powell, Shorter
- Councilmember Cody Rampey, Glencoe







- Mayor Larry Riggins, Westover
- Councilmember Marilyn Rodgers, Brundidge
- Councilmember Kaytrina Simmons, Florence
- Councilmember Billy Singleton, Clanton
- Councilmember Connie Spears, Madison
- Councilmember Roberta Stamp, Westover
- Mayor Kathy Thomas, Clayton
- Councilmember Willis Thompson, Muscle Shoals
- Councilmember Colt Turner, Glencoe

## 2024 CMO Emeriti

- Councilmember Janice Anderson, Midfield
- Councilmember Feast Broughton, Brewton
- Councilmember Wayne Byram, Leesburg
- Mayor Leigh Dollar, Guntersville
- Councilmember Terry L. Gilliam, Millport
- Mayor Sam I. Heflin, Priceville
- Mayor Stanley Hogeland, Gardendale
- Councilmember Cynthia L. Hood, Millport
- Councilmember George E. McCall Jr., Prichard
- Councilmember Alex Moses, Clayton
- Mayor Theoangelo Perkins, Harpersville
- Councilmember Vera J. Quaites, Foley
- Mayor Scott Reeves, Hokes Bluff
- Mayor Bobby Scott, Center Point
- Mayor Dana L. Snyder, Southside
- Councilmember Danny Joe Wagnon, Glencoe
- Mayor Jason Q. Ward, Lisman



## 2024 CMO Emeriti – Tier II

- Mayor Stanley Allred, Millport
- Councilmember Wayne E. Biggs, Saraland
- Councilmember Katherine Q. Breeden, Loxley
- Councilmember Newton Cromer, Saraland
- Mayor Allen J. Dunavant, Glen Allen
- Mayor Lawrence F. Haygood Jr., Tuskegee
- Mayor Rusty S. Jessup, Riverside
- Mayor Gary L. Livingston, Eva
- Mayor Mike Lockhart, Muscle Shoals
- Councilmember Ron Mason, Butler
- Councilmember Tommy Perry, Priceville
- Mayor Phil Segraves, Guin
- Councilmember Cleophus Stephens, Chatom
- Councilmember Joe N. Watson, Brewton
- Councilmember Bess Yarbrough, Centre



## 2024 CMO Emeriti – Tier III

- Mayor Howard Rubenstein, Saraland
- Mayor Carroll Lew Watson, Lincoln

## 2024 CMO Emeriti – Tier IV


- Councilmember Sadie Britt, Lincoln
- Mayor Charles H. Murphy, Robertsdale
- Councilmember Billy Pearson, Lincoln

## 2024 CMA Awards

- Boligee
- Brewton
- Center Point
- Foley
- Glencoe
- Hokes Bluff
- Midfield
- Opp
- Priceville
- Rainbow City
- Robertsdale
- Saraland
- Shorter
- Southside
- York



Scan the QR code to learn more about the CMO Program.





# ALM Announces 2024 Class of Alabama Communities of Excellence and STAR Award Honorees

Lori Jhons • Communications Director • ALM

The Alabama League of Municipalities recently announced the 2024 Alabama Communities of Excellence Class and STAR Award honorees at its annual graduation and awards ceremonies on October 30, 2024.

ACE was established in 2002 as a 501(c)(3) organization to provide technical assistance to select communities with populations ranging from 2,000 to 18,000 in an effort to strengthen long-term economic success.

We are proud two cities, Ashville and Ozark, have successfully completed all three phases of the ACE program. They join the illustrious group of communities that have earned the ACE designation, which brings our total to 45 designated communities.

The League also recently presented the 2024 ACE STAR Awards. These awards recognize individuals considered as the “shining stars” of the ACE program who have performed beyond the call of duty. This includes advisory board members, ACE ambassadors, community participants and volunteers for their work assisting the organization and the communities they serve.

## ACE Community – Ozark



## ACE Community – Ashville



## Outstanding ACE Leadership

Helena Mayor Brian Puckett

Helena Mayor Brian Puckett was selected for this honor because he has always been a great advocate and mentor of the ACE program since Helena’s designation in 2016, along with volunteering to be the pilot community for the reimagined Scale Back Alabama program, which has transformed into the new Healthy Alabama Communities program.



## Outstanding ACE Mayor

Center Point Mayor Bobby Scott

Center Point Mayor Bobby Scott was selected because of his commitment to accessibility to not only his staff but more importantly his citizens. He volunteers with local food banks, often making personal deliveries, and partners with local schools to improve student attendance and increase graduation rates. His dedication to both the seniors and the youth in his community, as well as his active leadership roles with the National League of Cities, are prime examples of why he was chosen for the award.



## Outstanding ACE Mayor

Haleyville Mayor Ken Sunseri

Haleyville Mayor Ken Sunseri was also selected for this award because of his strong leadership and proven results to complete quality of life projects related to health care, infrastructure, safety and recreation. He has helped secure over \$18 million in grants from federal and state agencies for the city; he spearheaded the construction of a new city hall that includes a tornado shelter for more than 400 people; and he led an effort to form a health care authority to keep their local hospital operational. He served as the local ACE coordinator before becoming mayor and continues to use those relationships and knowledge for the betterment of his city.



## Outstanding ACE Ambassador

Candice Hill

Candice Hill is an avid supporter of ACE not only as an ambassador but also as the grants and leadership director of the St. Clair County Economic Development Council. ACE ambassadors are the boots-on-the-ground experts dispatched to communities during phase one of the program. Asheville Mayor Derrick Mostella stated in his nomination that Candice spent many hours leading their community through the entire ACE process and attributes their successful completion of the project to her.







## Outstanding ACE Volunteer

Carol Morgan

Carol Morgan is considered a champion of Florala’s participation in the ACE program and even participated in the inaugural class of Florala’s leadership program, “LEAD Florala,” where she continues to serve on its steering committee. She has also been supportive of the local downtown development board and actively participates in the community’s comprehensive planning sessions. Mayor Gayle Robbins accepted the award on Carol's behalf.



**Congratulations to our newest ACE communities and award recipients!**

### The League appreciates the following entities for supporting the ACE Advisory Board in 2024:

Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs | Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association  
Alabama Municipal Electric Authority | Alabama Power Company | Alabama Small Business Development Center Network  
Auburn University – Government and Economic Development Institute | Goodwyn Mills Cawood  
Spire | The University of Alabama Center for Economic Development

Follow our ACE social media pages – Facebook: @ACETOWNS LinkedIn: @alabama-excellence



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### Why use Municipal Intercept Services (MIS) when you already have a debt collection service?

MIS is **NOT** a debt collection agency or service. MIS does not do what debt collection services do and debt collection services cannot offer what MIS does. 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 CANNOT offer you this service. MIS is a legislatively sanctioned conduit with the Alabama Department of Revenue (ADOR) that enables ADOR to recover delinquent debts owed by individuals to your municipality by collecting this debt from the individual’s Alabama state tax refund. This system was made possible by an Alabama legislative change enacted in 2014 through which ADOR agreed to process these debts through only two clearinghouse organizations: the Alabama League of Municipalities (ALM) for municipal entities and the Association of County Commissions of Alabama (ACCA) for county entities. In 2015, ALM formed MIS to act as the clearinghouse on behalf of its municipal entities. **NOTE:** If the debtor is not eligible for an Alabama State tax refund, no money can be collected.

### Who is eligible to use the MIS system?

Only municipal entities within Alabama are eligible to use the MIS system. This includes cities, towns, certain utility boards, housing authorities and hospitals. **For more information, visit: [www.alintercept.org](http://www.alintercept.org).**



# ALM Celebrates Third Class of EDA Graduates

The League, in partnership with the Alabama Community College System, celebrated eight communities for graduating from its third class of the Economic Development Academy on October 30, 2024. The graduates include the following municipalities: Ashland, Birmingham, Brantley, Clanton, Cordova, Flomaton, Helena and York.

While only municipal officials and municipal employees are eligible to receive Certified Municipal Official credit, business leaders and regional economic developers are welcome to participate in the program. All graduates receive a certificate from ACCS and are eligible to earn three hours of college credit from their area community college. We are proud 45 communities have graduated from the program!

The 2025 EDA class has already held its first meeting of the year in Birmingham. The five municipalities participating in the fourth class include: Aliceville, Ft. Payne, Glencoe, Tuscumbia and Wilton.

We appreciate the following sponsors for partnering with us to provide them with this opportunity: Alabama Port Authority, Alabama Power Company, Hand Arendall, Insyftul, Manufacture Alabama, Spire and United Bank.

## ASHLAND

Mayor Larry Fetner; Councilmember Dianne Ballard; Councilmember Kim M. Cain; Councilmember Annette F. Gaither; Municipal Clerk Chelsey Wynn; Assistant Clerk Robin Catrett; Economic Developer Chance Jones

## BIRMINGHAM

Councilmember Wardine Alexander; Councilmember Darrell O’Quinn; Councilmember Hunter Williams; Councilmember Clinton Woods; Deputy Council Administrator Jeff McDaniels; Chief of Operations Chaz Mitchell

## BRANTLEY

Mayor Bernard Sullivan; Councilmember Melissa Bush; Councilmember Ashley Stewart; Planning Commission Member Karen Gray; Lisa Harris

## CLANTON

Mayor Jeff Mimms; Councilmember Awlahjaday Agee; Councilmember Billy Singleton; Executive Assistant Susie Ellison; Executive Assistant Debbie Street; Manager of Community and Economic Development for Central Electric Cooperative Connie Bainbridge

## CORDOVA

Mayor Jeremy Pate; Councilmember Jason Daniel; Councilmember Jane Mitchell; City Clerk Casera Laing; Director of Economic Development Renee Sides; Planning Commission Chair Lawrence Sides

## FLOMATON

Mayor Jim Johnson; Councilmember Roger Adkinson; Councilmember Lillian Dean; Councilmember Anna Marie Lee; City Clerk Carrie Moore





**HELENA**

Mayor Brian Puckett; Councilmember Alice Lobell; Councilmember Chris Willis; Councilmember Harold Woodman; City Clerk Amanda Traywick; City Attorney Brian Hayes; Trish Rushing

**YORK**

Mayor Willie Lake; City Clerk Angelia Delaine; Industrial Board Chair Jeffery Artis; Aleah Aiston; Natasha Bell; Daniel Lake; LuShun Wallace

The Economic Development Academy is specifically designed to educate and engage municipal officials on the essential elements and phases of economic development. Scan the QR code to find out more about the EDA.



**BRANTLEY**



**CLANTON**



**CORDOVA**



**FLOMATON**

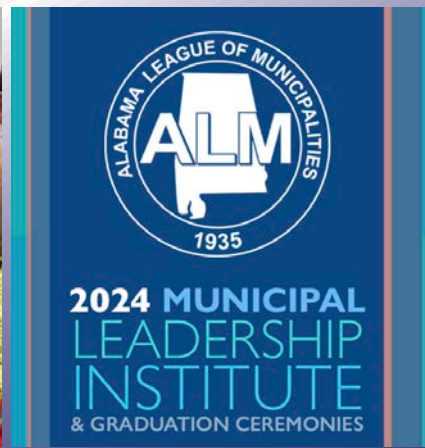


**HELENA**



**YORK**





*ALM Executive Director Greg Cochran and Deputy Director Kayla Bass presented a \$5,000 check to DesignAlabama's Executive Director Gina Clifford and board on Oct. 31, 2024, to support their mission. Pictured left to right: Jeremy Cutts, Helena Mayor Brian Puckett, Jim Byard, Gina Clifford, Greg Cochran, Kayla Bass and Brandon Bias.*





# City of Helena Awarded First Healthy Alabama Community Designation for Trailblazing Efforts to Support Healthy Lifestyles

Lori Jhons • Communications Director • ALM

The city of Helena was awarded the first Healthy Alabama Community designation in the state of Alabama at the Alabama League of Municipalities' 2024 Graduation and Awards Ceremonies on October 30, 2024. The Healthy Alabama Communities program was developed in 2022 in partnership with Alabama Communities of Excellence, the Alabama Department of Public Health, the Alabama Hospital Association and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama to support communities and community leaders in identifying and implementing policy, system and environmental changes to improve the health of all community members.

Helena Mayor Brian Puckett volunteered Helena to participate as the pilot community. Under his leadership and with the support of his staff, Helena has been successful in improving access to physical activity by connecting trails and sidewalks throughout its municipality. One example is the plan to construct additional paved trails within the trail system that will allow people to go see the Cahaba Lillies; make their way to Amphitheater Park where Buck Creek has a kayak landing to the Cahaba River; or head to the new 104-acre sports and leisure complex.

"We are proud to award Mayor Puckett and the city of Helena the first Healthy Alabama Community designation in Alabama," ALM Executive Director Greg Cochran said. "ALM is excited to partner with such great agencies to help improve the health of Alabamians by providing access to nutrition and physical activities throughout our communities. When you prioritize health in your community, it spurs other opportunities for economic growth, and in turn helps strengthen Alabama's economy."



*Left: Helena is currently constructing a new city hall that will include a senior center on the first floor. Above: The Hillsboro Trail, a 2.5-mile multi-use trail, connects Helena's residential communities, schools and commercial areas and provides residents an opportunity for alternative transportation like bicycles and golf carts. A rock-climbing wall, created by local Eagle Scouts, is one of several fun and recreational activities available along the route.*



To allow Helena citizens a more sustainable way to carry and access water, the city plans to install water bottle filling stations at the new sports complex, city hall and existing facilities. Furthermore, Helena has plans to provide space for its senior citizens to gather and receive meals at its new city hall. The city is also partnering with a local church to support a food pantry for all citizens to access.

A spinoff from the Scale Back Alabama program, the Healthy Alabama Communities program provides a greater holistic view of health in all facets – access to nutrition, physical activities and support for breastfeeding mothers in our communities. Thriving communities support their members in achieving healthy behaviors. This is accomplished by providing opportunities for safe physical activity and access to nutritious foods that are convenient for all members of the community.

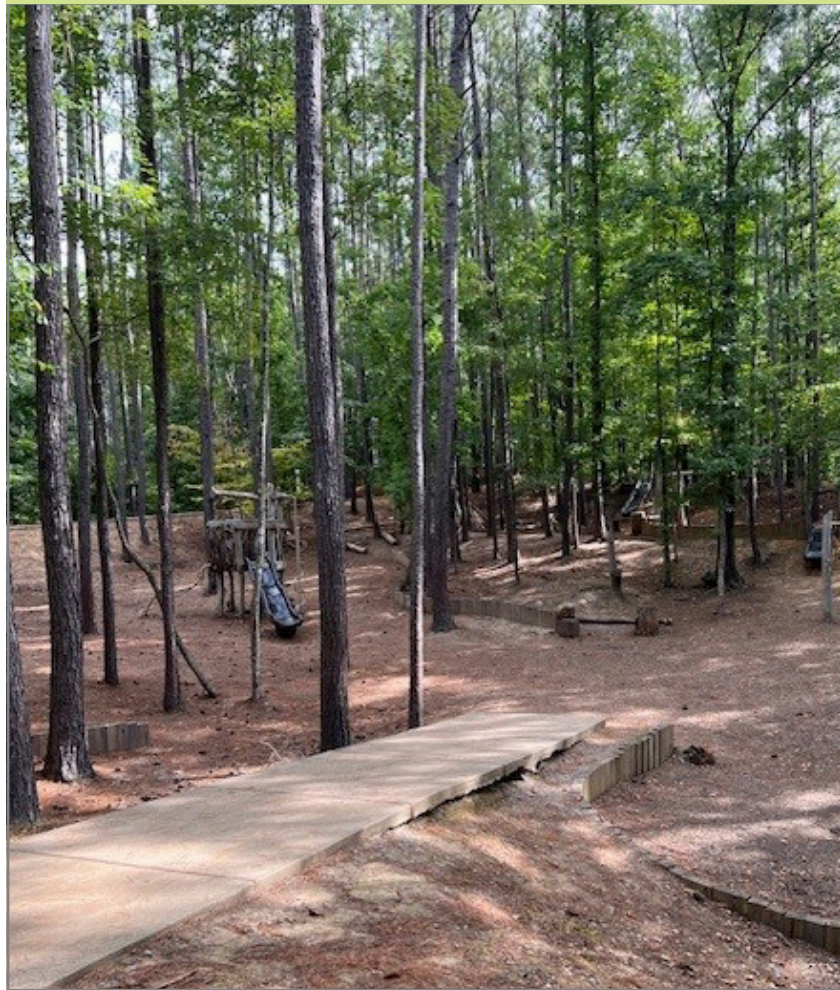
“The Healthy Alabama Communities program is a great tool to put your residents first. The training given through the program was informative and easily laid out for all of our key stakeholders to come together from different areas of the city to work with one common goal of providing new and innovative ways to provide our residents with easy access to key health areas,” Mayor Puckett said. “I encourage every city in the state to take advantage of this new program to serve your residents in continuing to build a healthy and vibrant community.”

Communities can use the Alabama Physical Activity and Nutrition Plan (ALPAN), by scanning the QR code, to guide decisions that help create healthy opportunities and environments. The plan is also used as a guide to assist communities in qualifying for the Healthy Alabama Communities designation. Developed by the Alabama Wellness Alliance, ALPAN contains evidence-based physical activity and nutrition strategies to improve health using collaborative and consistent approaches.



“Community leaders and stakeholders play a critical part in making sure there are resources and opportunities for healthy, active lifestyles,” Molly Killman, director of the ADPH Nutrition and Physical Activity Division, said. “When local governments create active environments to support healthy choices, community members will engage in healthy behaviors and live longer, happier lives.”

To learn more about the Healthy Alabama Communities program, visit [healthyalabcommunities.org](http://healthyalabcommunities.org) or scan the QR code. ■



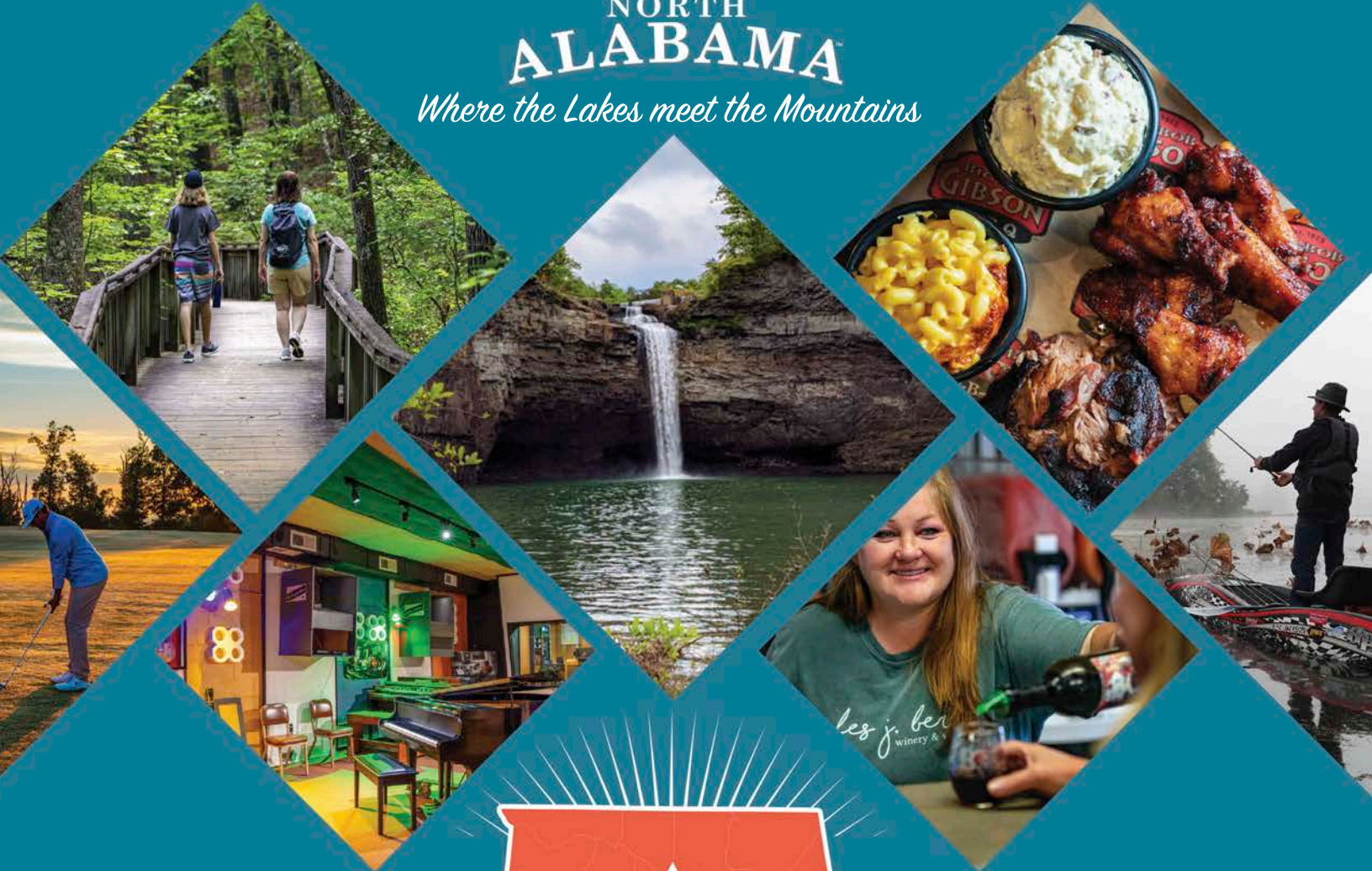
*Top: The Lee Springs Park walking trail encourages outdoor exercise. Bottom: Pictured left to right: ALM Executive Director Greg Cochran, Mayor Puckett, Council President Alice Lobell, Molly Killman and Mary Jackson, ALM director of professional and community development.*





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## *A Letter from Kevin Hall*

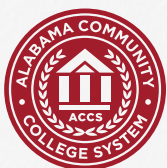
CIRCUIT JUDGE  
5TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

I was a guest speaker for the Building Better Cases course at CACC (Central Alabama Community College) and sat through the entire course. I write in support of the program.

As the saying goes, it does not matter what you know only what you can prove. A brilliant peace officer is impotent in a courtroom if they cannot translate their knowledge to a language of legal significance while being understandable by juries; this is a difficult task, especially with the technological advances of the last 20 years and the resulting complexity and technical nature of modern investigations. Merely knowing what is possible or even how to do it is not enough because our Constitutional rights are involved. Having taught a topic and sat through the class, I saw how this class bridged that gap by layering in the legal standards that must govern each investigative step in addition to the case law update session.

As citizens, we demand unwavering excellence of our public servants, but they cannot be excellent without training. Knowledge increases potential and excellence is trained, with courses like Building Better Cases acting as the catalyst for improvement. Since the Better Cases class, I noticed an improvement in the quality of search warrant applications and affidavits coming from officers who attended that training and am now noticing improvements from other officers from participating agencies, which is a real-life example of several adages.

**KEVIN HALL**  
Circuit Judge  
5th Judicial Circuit



Make *Life* Better.

To learn more about training opportunities available through Alabama's community and technical colleges, visit [acss.edu/publicsafety](https://acss.edu/publicsafety).



# The Alabama Legislative Process

## ALM Legal Department

One of the prime functions of the Alabama League of Municipalities is to represent the interests of municipal government at the legislative level by informing members of legislation introduced that might affect municipal government and by presenting bills to the Legislature on behalf of Alabama's municipalities. It is extremely important for municipal officials and officers to have a good, basic understanding of the legislative process in Alabama. This article briefly explains the workings of the Alabama Legislature and how legislation is passed by that body.

### Constitutional Provisions

Article IV of the Alabama Constitution of 1901 (Sections 44 through 111) establishes the legislative department of state government. Section 44 states that the legislative power of the state shall be vested in a legislature composed of a Senate and a House of Representatives. Section 44 has been construed by the Alabama Supreme Court to give plenary power to the state legislature. *State v. Lane*, 181 Ala. 646, 62 So. 31 (1913).

According to the Court, the Alabama Legislature possesses all of the legislative power residing in the state under the United States Constitution, except as that power is expressly or impliedly limited by the Alabama Constitution. This differs from the powers granted to the United States Congress in that Congress can exercise only those powers enumerated in the Constitution of the United States or implied therefrom.

Article IV prescribes the manner of drafting bills, the organization and qualifications of members of both houses, authorizes each house to determine the rules of its proceedings and establishes procedures for the enactment of laws. Due to space limitations, only the provisions most applicable to the interests of municipalities will be discussed in this article.

### Composition of the House and the Senate

The state legislature consists of 35 senators and 105 members of the House of Representatives. This number was established by order of a three-judge federal district court for the Middle District of Alabama, Northern Division, in the case of *Sims v. Amos*, 336 F. Supp. 924, aff'd, 409 U.S. 942 (1972). In the decree, the court divided the state into 105 house districts and 35 senatorial districts. Each house district is entitled to one representative and each senate district is entitled to one senator. Each district has approximately the same number of people as any other district.

### Qualifications of Legislators

Section 47 of the Alabama Constitution of 1901, states that senators must be at least 25 years of age at the time of their election and representatives must be at least 21 years of age at the time of their election. Both senators and representatives must also have been citizens and residents of Alabama for three years and must have lived in their respective districts for at least one year immediately preceding their election.

Section 60 of the Alabama Constitution of 1901 states that no person convicted of embezzlement of public money, bribery, perjury or other infamous crimes is eligible for membership in the state legislature.

Each house has the authority, given by the Alabama Constitution, to punish its members. With the concurrence of two-thirds of either house, a member may be expelled. A member who has been expelled for corruption is not thereafter eligible for membership in either house. Sections 53 and 54, Alabama Constitution of 1901.

### Election and Terms of Members

Members of the House and the Senate are elected, for four-year terms, on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November in the even years which are not leap years. Their terms begin on the day following their election. Their terms expire on the day after the election of their successors four years later. Section 46, Alabama Constitution of 1901. Amendment 57 to the Alabama Constitution of 1901, provides that each house shall judge the qualifications of its members.

### Organizational Session

The state legislature meets in Organizational Session on the second Tuesday in January following the election of



members. The only business that may be transacted at such a session is the organization of the legislature for the ensuing four years, the election of House and Senate officers, the appointment of standing and interim committees, the canvassing of election returns and the determination of contested elections.

During the Organizational Session, the House membership elects a speaker who has the duty of presiding over the House of Representatives. The House membership also elects a speaker pro tem to preside over the House in the absence of the speaker.

The Senate is presided over by the lieutenant governor. During the Organizational Session, the Senate chooses a president pro tempore to preside in the absence of the lieutenant governor.

Pursuant to Section 53 of the Alabama Constitution of 1901, the House and the Senate adopt rules of procedure for the next four years.

## **Legislative Committees**

The standing committees of each house are established by the rules of each house. These committees, which are required by the Alabama Constitution, operate throughout the session for the consideration of legislation assigned to them.

Committee members are named at the Organizational Session and hold membership throughout their terms. The members of House standing committees are appointed by the speaker of the House. Members of Senate standing committees are appointed by the senate president pro tem.

## **Length of Sessions**

Amendment 339 to the Alabama Constitution of 1901, requires the state legislature to meet in annual regular sessions. Each regular session is limited to 30 legislative days within 105 calendar days. Each special session called by the governor is limited to 12 legislative days within 30 calendar days.

A legislative day is a day on which either house of the legislature is actually in session. Normally, the legislature will meet in session two days per week and schedule committee work on the other days.

## **Types of Bills**

Amendment 397 to the Alabama Constitution of 1901, states that a general law is a law which in its terms and effect applies either to the whole state or to one or more municipalities of the state less than the whole in a class.

A special or private law is one which applies to an individual, association or corporation. A local law is a law which is not a general law or a special or private law.

Section 11-40-12, Code of Alabama 1975, establishes eight classes of municipalities based on population. The legislature has the authority to pass measures which affect only those municipalities within a specified class or classes. Such classification legislation is defined as general law by Amendment 397 to the Alabama Constitution. Any legislation which has application to only one municipality must be advertised prior to introduction according to the provisions of Section 106 of Alabama Constitution of 1901.

Section 106, as amended by Amendment 341, states that notice of all local bills must be published, prior to introduction, at least once a week for four consecutive weeks in some newspaper published in the county. If no newspaper is published in the county, then the notice must be posted, prior to introduction, for two consecutive weeks at five different places in the county.

## **Steps in Passing Legislation**

If a member of the legislature decides that a proposal has merit and that legislation should be enacted, the legislator prepares a bill or has a bill prepared for introduction into the house of which he or she is a member. That legislator then becomes the sponsor of the bill. All bills introduced must be prepared by the Legislative Services Agency (LSA) as directed by a member of the Legislature.

LSA is the principal bill drafting and legal research office serving the Legislature of the state of Alabama. LSA is a great source of information to the citizens of Alabama on all things relating to current legislation and historical legislative information.

Once bills are prepared by LSA, they are often introduced in both houses of the legislature on or about the same date. This practice is not prohibited except Section 70 of the Alabama Constitution of 1901, requires that all bills raising revenues shall originate in the House of Representatives. There is no limitation upon the number of sponsors that may sign a particular bill.

After introduction, the bill is assigned a consecutive number, for convenience and reference, and is read by title only. This action is known as the first reading of the bill. The speaker of the House of Representatives or the president pro tempore





of the Senate, depending on the body where the bill was introduced, refers the bill to a standing committee of the House or the Senate.

Section 62 of the Alabama Constitution of 1901, states that no bill shall become a law until it has been referred to a standing committee of each house, acted upon by that committee in session, and returned from that committee to the chamber for passage.

Standing committees are charged with the important responsibility of examining bills and recommending action to the full House or Senate. At some time when the House or Senate is not in session, the committees of each house will meet and consider the bills which have been referred to them and decide whether or not particular bills should be reported to the full membership. It is during these committee sessions that members of the general public are given an opportunity to speak for or against the measures being considered by the standing committees.

Bills which are favorably acted upon by the standing committees are reported to the entire house for consideration and are placed on the regular calendar. Bills reported unfavorably are placed on the adverse calendar. If a committee fails to act, the membership of each house, by a vote, may require the committee to act and report its action to the body at its next meeting.

The committee reports a bill to the full house when the reports of the committees are called. The bill is given its second reading at that time and is placed on the calendar. The second reading is by title only.

Section 63 of the Alabama Constitution of 1901, requires that every bill be read on three different days in each house and that each bill be read at length on final passage.

Bills are listed on the calendar by number, sponsor and title in the order in which they are reported from committee. Bills are considered for a third reading (passage) in the order of the calendar unless action is taken to consider a bill out of regular order.

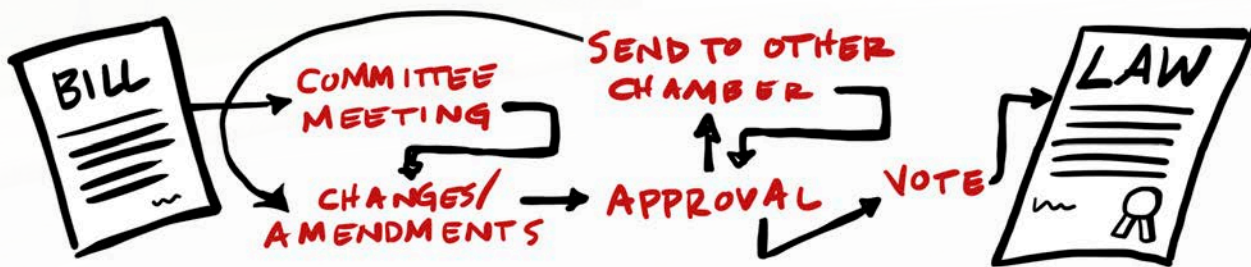
Important bills can be brought to the top of the order by special order or by a suspension of the rules. Special orders are recommended by the Rules Committee and must be adopted by a majority vote. In the final days of a session, both houses usually operate daily on special order calendars. When a bill comes up for consideration, the entire membership of the house considers its passage. The bill is read at length, studied and debated. In general, regular parliamentary rules of procedure apply when a bill is being debated on final passage. Each house has special rules which limit debate. A majority vote in each house is necessary for passage of legislation except in cases where the Constitution requires more than a simple majority. For example, a proposed Constitutional Amendment must receive the vote of three-fifths of all members elected. Section 284, Alabama Constitution of 1901. In a special session, any legislation not covered in the governor's call, or proclamation, must receive a two-thirds vote in each house. Section 76, Alabama Constitution of 1901.

Bills passed in one house are sent to the other house by a formal message and the bills then receive their first reading in the second house. Proposals go through the same procedure in the second house: committee study and report, second and third readings and floor debate and votes.

If the second house passes the bill without amendment, it goes back to the originating house for enrollment. If a bill is amended in the second house, it must be returned to the first house for consideration of the amendment. The first house may vote to concur or not to concur, in which case the bill dies. The first house may vote not to concur and request a conference committee to work out the differences between the two bills. If the other house agrees to a conference, the presiding officers of each house appoint members to the conference committee.

The conference committee meets and tries to reconcile the differences in the two versions of the bill. If agreement is reached and both houses adopt the conference committee report, the bill is finally passed.

Sometimes a house may refuse to adopt the report of the conference committee and ask for a further conference. If the committee is still unable to reach an agreement, it may ask to be discharged and request the appointment of another conference committee to begin the process again. If the conferees never agree, the bill is lost.





When a bill is passed in both houses in identical form, it is enrolled or copied in its final form and sent to the house of origin for signature by the presiding officer in the presence of the members. The measure is then sent to the second house where it is also signed by the presiding officer in the presence of the members. Then the bill is sent to the governor. The governor is not required to sign proposed Constitutional amendments, they are sent directly to the secretary of state for submission to voters for ratification at the time prescribed in the legislation.

## **Action by the Governor**

When a bill reaches the governor, they may sign it and thus complete the enactment of a bill into law. However, if the governor objects to the bill, they may veto it or suggest amendments to the bill and return it to the house of origin. The bill is then reconsidered, first by the originating house and, if passed, by the second house. If a majority of the members elected to each house agree to the proposed amendments, the bill is returned to the governor for their signature. If both houses cannot agree to the governor's amendments or if the governor proposes no amendments but returns the measure, the bill has, in effect, been vetoed. The houses then may try to override the governor's veto. An affirmative vote of 18 senators and 53 representatives is required to override the governor's veto.

If the governor fails to return a bill to the house of origin within six days after it is presented to them, Sundays excepted, the bill becomes law without the governor's signature, unless the return was prevented by recess or adjournment. In such a case, the bill must be returned within two days after the legislature reassembles or the bill becomes law without the governor's signature. Bills which reach the governor less than five days before the end of the session may be approved by them within 10 days after adjournment. Bills not approved within that time do not become law. This is known as the pocket veto. The governor has the authority to approve or disapprove any item or items of an appropriation bill without vetoing the entire bill.

## **Budget Isolation Resolutions**

Amendment 448 to the Alabama Constitution of 1901, states that the governor must submit a proposed budget to the legislature by the second day of each regular session. The legislature must make the basic appropriations necessary for the current budgetary period before passing any other legislation. However, if three-fifths of a quorum adopt a resolution declaring that this restriction does not apply to a certain bill, that bill may proceed to final passage. This is known as the budget isolation resolution and permits the legislature to enact legislation prior to adopting a budget.

## **Unfunded Mandates**

The Alabama Constitution provides that any general law whose purpose or effect is to require a new or increased expenditure of funds held or disbursed by the governing body of a municipality or county, or instrumentality thereof, shall not take effect unless (1) it is approved by the affected governing bodies or (2) the legislature provides funding to pay for the mandate or (3) the legislature passes the legislation by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of those voting in each house. Amendment 621 of the Constitution of Alabama of 1901.

The amendment does not apply to: (1) local laws; (2) acts requiring expenditures of school bonds; (3) acts defining new crimes or amending definitions of crimes; (4) acts adopted prior to the ratification of the amendment; (5) acts adopted to comply with federal mandates, only to the extent of the federal mandate; (6) an act adopted or enacted by two-thirds of those voting in each house of the Legislature and any rule or regulation adopted to implement that act; (7) acts determined by the Legislative Fiscal Office to have an aggregate insignificant fiscal impact on affected governments; or (8) acts of general application prescribing the minimum compensation for public officials. The term "aggregate insignificant fiscal impact" shall mean any impact less than \$50,000 annually on all affected governments statewide.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this article is to give the reader a basic understanding of the Alabama Legislature as well as the process for introducing and passing legislation. It is important for municipalities to have a good basic understanding of Alabama's legislative process. For further questions relating to Alabama's Legislature and the legislative process, contact the Legislative Services Agency (LSA). For questions relating to legislation affecting municipalities, please contact ALM's Advocacy or Legal Departments. ■



## Building Upon Alabama's Progress

### Governor Kay Ivey

**As** I reflect on recent years and look forward to the future, I cannot help but be optimistic for Alabama. The pace of our progress in advancing Alabama's economic development and our quality of life is remarkable. More importantly, the positive momentum we have generated shows no sign of slowing down.

One of the reasons I continue to hold great hope for more progress is the collective resolve of our leaders from the city level up to state office holders to pull together for the overall benefit of our people. In Montgomery, the Alabama Legislature has proven to be a remarkable partner in championing major investments in jobs and infrastructure and in advancing education since 2023. Each of these commitments is historic.

For starters, reauthorizing and updating Alabama's world class business recruitment program in 2023 was monumental. The \$49 billion in capital business investment and the creation of 87,000 jobs since I took office, in 2017, are largely the result of state and local economic development officials leveraging these crucial incentives. Many of your communities have directly benefitted and many more will join the fold in the future.

Record job growth requires a growing and capable workforce. An equally strong commitment has been made to give more Alabamians in-demand skills and abilities to land good jobs. The passage of the Working for Alabama legislative package – and specifically, the Alabama Workforce Transformation Act in 2024 – will retool our state's job training programs to increase workforce participation. I recently appointed Senate Pro Tem Greg Reed to serve as senior advisor to workforce transformation. In the coming months as the Alabama Department of Labor transforms into the Alabama Department of Workforce, Greg Reed will play a critical role in establishing this new agency on sound footing.

Modernizing our infrastructure is equally vital to Alabama's economic growth. Not only are we continuing to invest hundreds of millions of dollars in new road improvements across our state, but we have earmarked even more funds for the expansion of broadband service to cover all of Alabama. From our smallest communities to our largest cities, broadband brings great opportunity for local job creation and enhanced quality of life. Thanks to the support of our legislators, our investments in broadband have propelled Alabama from 47<sup>th</sup> in the nation to 24<sup>th</sup> and rising!

Alabama's workforce expansion is also dependent upon the delivery of high-quality education for our young people. We have invested and continue to invest in new programs that increasingly challenge our youngest learners to achieve and excel. We are focusing resources to turnaround struggling elementary schools, and investing in specialized high schools, like the Alabama School of Healthcare Sciences in Demopolis to enable students to acquire most-needed job skills. We are also committed to raising starting teacher salaries to among the highest levels among our neighboring states in order to attract the best instructors for our students.

The recent national election has also brought a new focus to "Backing the Blue" all across America. As the legislative session begins, I have made clear that public safety must be a top priority in 2025. While I have always been a strong advocate for our law enforcement personnel, I feel a united public effort to stand behind their sacrifice and commitment is long overdue. No doubt, this is a sentiment shared in each of your communities.

For the 2025 legislative session, my staff and I are drafting new legislation to combat crime and improve our criminal justice system. More details will be announced in my State of the State address.

Alabama's future depends on all of us. I will continue to work together with you – our local partners – to ensure our economy is strong, our students receive the best education we can deliver and our streets are safe. ■





## Working Toward Even Brighter Days for All Alabamians

Lt. Governor Will Ainsworth

Since becoming lieutenant governor, much of my office's efforts have been focused in the areas of job creation and industrial recruitment; improving our workforce development and its delivery system; protecting and expanding our military infrastructure and federal bases; ensuring that our state remains the friendliest and most welcoming for active service members, veterans and their dependents; widening I-65 from the Tennessee line to the Gulf of Mexico; and preserving the fundamental morals and values that make Alabama such a special place to live, work, worship and raise families.

Our 2025 legislative agenda offers a continuation of that important work, but with President Donald Trump returning to office, Alabama now has a committed White House partner who supports our state rather than a partisan political opponent who seeks to punish us for our conservative traditions.

During 2024, I joined U.S. Sen. Katie Britt in leading Alabama's delegation to the Farnborough International Air Show near London, and we made many valuable contacts that will likely produce additional jobs and investment down the line, yet in order to take advantage of those potential opportunities and others like them, we must provide the trained and skilled workers.

My Lieutenant Governor's Commission on 21st Century Workforce has largely accomplished the goal of fundamentally transforming Alabama's job training initiatives and targeting them toward the in-demand jobs of today and the jobs of the future, but with the constantly evolving economy, its valuable work will need to continue.

Similarly, the Alabama Military Stability Commission, which I chair by statute, has already passed dozens of bills that improve the lives of the men and women who wear our nation's uniform, those who served and the family members who support them. The bills we enacted provide tax cuts for deployed troops; enhance the educational and occupational options for dependents of active armed forces personnel; and implement occupational licensure reciprocity that makes Alabama even more welcoming for those who serve. Its work, too, will continue with additional measures this session.

We are encouraged, as well, by assurances from the Alabama congressional delegation that President Trump will relocate the U.S. Space Command headquarters to its rightful place in Huntsville after President Joe Biden overruled every recommendation and placed it in Colorado for purely punitive purposes.

President Trump himself also committed federal support for my efforts to widen Interstate 65 to three lanes both north and south, and we will follow up on his promise for this vital corridor that transports countless goods, tourists and everyday Alabamians.

In the aftermath of President Trump's dramatic victory, pundits and reporters who cover politics learned what Alabamians have known all along — the inherent importance of issues such as keeping boys out of girls' sports and blocking them from female locker rooms and showers; protecting religious freedom and expression; and showing support for longtime allies like Israel.

As lieutenant governor, I have spoken often in support of these commonsense conservative positions and worked with both the state Senate and House to promote their protection and advancement. With the change in administration in Washington, the "woke" agenda has been dealt a blow, but its adherents refuse to give up, so Alabama's Legislature and leaders must remain the last line of defense to prevent them from gaining a foothold here.

A strong economy and job market, a welcoming home for military infrastructure and personnel, a transportation system that replaces gridlock with convenience, and a state whose morals and values serve as a beacon for the rest of the nation to follow remain the bedrock goals I will work toward throughout my time in public service. ■





## 2025 Priorities As New Senate Pro Tem

### Senate Pro Tem Garlan Gudger



**S**erving as a member of the Alabama Senate since 2019 has allowed me to be a part of some of the most important legislative accomplishments this century. Now as the nominee for president pro tempore of the Alabama Senate, I look forward to leading the body to even greater heights when we convene the 2025 legislative session.

Among the most important work that we will do involves the handling of Alabama’s budgets. The people of Alabama continue to benefit from the Alabama Legislature’s conservative budgeting implemented during the last several years. Being good stewards of taxpayer dollars and eliminating waste in state government have been priorities of ours and will continue to be vital to the growth of Alabama’s economy moving forward.

We never strayed from our conservative approach when the economy grew, and because of that, we are better prepared to handle downturns and inevitable declines in revenue. Working families, local governments and job creators all benefit from this principled approach.

The Senate will also continue prioritizing economic development and workforce development. Our cities and towns across Alabama are the best places in America to live and work, and we are focused on equipping them with all the tools they need to move their communities forward. The economic development and workforce development packages from recent legislative sessions have laid a solid foundation for success in those areas, and we plan to explore ways we can grow more jobs and increase workforce participation for current and future generations.

One thing I have learned during my time in the Alabama Senate is that our work can have a tremendous impact on the everyday lives of Alabamians. That is why one of my personal priorities is addressing the mental health needs of our state’s citizens. Whether it is funding for additional programs, increased access to care or specialized approaches for veterans, I am committed to improving mental health care in Alabama.

There is much work to be done when the legislative session kicks off in February, and it is truly an honor to serve on behalf of the people of my district and across the state. We do not take our responsibility lightly and remain dedicated to serving with integrity for the good of our great state. ■





## 2024 Session Review and Updates for 2025

### House Speaker Nathaniel Ledbetter

**A**s we prepare for the 2025 legislative cycle, it is important to take a moment to reflect on all that was accomplished in 2024. By the time we reached the halfway point of the session in late March, we had already passed enough significant legislation for an entire session, which matches the output of the current quadrennium. I genuinely believe that the current legislative body has achieved more in the last two sessions than many others have in a full quadrennium—a testament to the members' commitment to moving our state forward.

Recognizing that the rising cost of childcare has made it financially impossible for many Alabama parents to work, we passed legislation creating a childcare tax credit.

Many of Alabama's high-wage jobs are concentrated in cities like Huntsville, Birmingham and Mobile. However, a common challenge in these areas is the lack of affordable housing, which prevents many eligible workers from seeking employment. To address this issue, we enacted the Alabama Workforce Housing Tax Credit, which will significantly help people return to work.

Education remains a top priority. We made another historic investment of \$9.3 billion in public schools, community colleges and four-year universities. Additionally, Alabama's teachers are receiving a well-deserved pay raise for the fifth consecutive year. The starting salary for classroom teachers is now \$47,600; the highest among our neighboring states.

Additionally, we made great strides in policy areas important to the people of Alabama, such as election integrity, veteran mental health, school choice and much more.

With the 2025 Legislative Session on the horizon, members of the Alabama House of Representatives are eager to carry our momentum into year three of the quadrennium and continue moving our state in a positive direction.

Before my time as a member of the Alabama House of Representatives, I served on the Rainsville City Council and later as mayor. This experience has shown me that when our cities succeed, the state of Alabama succeeds. The Alabama League of Municipalities is a strong advocate for sound public policy, and I look forward to our continued partnership.

Whether you're a resident of our smallest town or our biggest city, we will continue to pass legislation that helps make your community a great place to live, work and raise a family. ■



THE ALABAMA

# LEGISLATURE

Visit the Alabama Legislature's website to view bills, find legislators' contact information and session info, even live stream meetings! The Alabama Constitution, Code of Alabama and the Administrative Code are also available.





## WITH U.S. REPRESENTATIVE SHOMARI FIGURES



### **What or who inspired you to run for public office?**

My inspiration comes from a combination of my parents; growing up in Alabama with its history; and the time I spent in government to this point. I know how the government works and how it can be used for good for the people that need it most.

### **What is your vision for Alabama, and how will you strengthen and support quality-of-life initiatives, particularly in rural Alabama?**

The people of Alabama can't thrive economically if they are not able to receive the basic services to remain healthy. We must expand Medicaid in Alabama. I envision Alabama as a place where families want to be, where businesses want to be located and an environment that prioritizes opportunities for everyone. Alabama can be an environment where our education system is thriving and supporting all teachers, and we are supporting students to have great careers where they currently live, where students have a better quality of life than past generations. As stated, one of the biggest challenges we have in rural Alabama is the lack of health care resources - including a lack of primary care physicians and hospital closures across the state, in particular in District 2. This issue is exacerbated by Alabama's unwillingness to expand Medicaid. From a federal perspective, we must work to expand Medicaid. The impact of this issue expands further than health care. It is an economic issue. Companies and workers will not live in communities that don't have hospitals or doctors. This inhibits the ability of rural communities to recruit the economic activity that is necessary for long term sustainability in rural Alabama.



### **As a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, how will you work to strengthen Alabama's municipalities?**

We understand that all municipalities need more resources. The core responsibility of a congressman is to drive resources back to your community so that municipalities can strengthen their economic viability. Whether that is investments in infrastructure, health care or education, these are all things that can help bolster a municipality's viability.



## You have a very expansive district; what is something that District 2 communities have in common?

District 2 expands from the borders of Mississippi to the Georgia line. Most of the 13 counties are rural. Although each county may have different specific needs the underlying thread for all is health care and good paying jobs. Nearly every county in this district is fearful of losing a hospital within the next several years. The unfortunate reality is that many of them will lose a hospital just as many counties have in the past year. Beyond the health care challenges, communities across this district are in dire need of infrastructure investments and good paying jobs. Twelve out of the 13 counties in this district lost population last year and will likely lose population again this year. This is in large part to the lack of career and job opportunities. This is a common issue across the entirety of the district, and we must work collectively to address this.

## As a U.S. representative, how will you work with local, state and federal partners to spur economic development opportunities for District 2?

It starts with listening. Listening to local stakeholders and what is restricting their economic growth. It takes coming to the table with government leaders regardless of party to explore how we can leverage local, state and federal resources to drive more growth across the district. This takes an understanding that we need to create an environment that is both friendly to workers and businesses. These are not mutually exclusive concepts. We need to understand what businesses need and what it takes to bring jobs to local communities. We need to understand the reality that Alabama workers are paid the fourth lowest wages in the United States. When workers do better, businesses do better, and essentially, we all do better.

## Tell us something about Shomari that we wouldn't read in your bio.

I grew up spending a lot of time outdoors hunting, fishing and working in construction. I am optimistic. Despite this year's struggles, Alabama (football) will again win a national championship! #RollTide ■





# Building a Bright Future: How Semmes is Leveraging EDA Strategies as a Young City

Caroline Carter • Communications Intern • ALM

The city of Semmes, incorporated in May 2011, is one of Alabama’s youngest municipalities and has grown its population to approximately 5,000 residents. However, the city serves a much broader area in Mobile County, earning a reputation as a hub for its surrounding communities. Known for its plentiful nurseries, rich history and vibrant community events, Semmes has quickly become a community that is drawing attention for its steady growth, expanding amenities and efforts to create a prosperous destination for citizens and businesses alike.

Mayor Brandon Van Hook, elected in 2020, brings a business-minded and community-focused approach to leadership. As the owner of the popular Hickory Pit Too restaurant and a former chamber of commerce leader, Van Hook has leveraged his experience to prioritize infrastructure, public safety and economic development. His leadership has guided the city through a period of rapid growth, positioning Semmes as a model of thoughtful planning and investment.

The Alabama League of Municipalities (ALM) launched the Economic Development Academy (EDA) in 2021 to educate municipal officials on the essential phases of economic development and their role in fostering growth within their communities. Developed in partnership with the Alabama Community College System and guided by an advisory council of industry leaders, the academy connects municipal officials with peers and experts to prepare cities and towns for sustainable progress.

Semmes joined the EDA in 2023 with a clear purpose: to strengthen its economic sustainability and attract business investments. Recognizing the importance of aligning city goals with proven best practices, the city’s leadership saw the EDA as an opportunity to learn from experts and refine their growth strategies.

The city’s EDA team included Mayor Van Hook, Mayor Pro-Tempore Helen Joyce, Councilmember Jason Herring, Communications Director Liz Lovelady, Semmes Chamber of Commerce President Lisa Owen and Semmes Chamber of Commerce past president, Sharon Murrill. Together, they emphasized teamwork and collaboration to ensure that insights gained from the program would lead to meaningful action for the city.

Semmes entered the program with the goal of identifying weaknesses, developing actionable plans and fostering sustainable growth. They met four times throughout the year to complete assignments and develop actionable strategies. As part of EDA, each municipality is required to implement a community project and report on its outcomes, with participants recognized during ALM’s annual graduation ceremony in the fall.

Through its participation in the EDA, Semmes began with a detailed community economic vitality survey that identified several areas for improvement. This analysis provided the foundation for targeted initiatives to address these challenges.

As Lovelady explained, “The EDA helped us fine-tune our vision for the city and get progress in motion. The classes gave us the outlook we needed to evaluate and find our areas needing improvement. Just attending the classes gave us the progressive push we needed to go after our needs.”

The program also highlighted the importance of branding and maintaining a strong digital presence. From updating the city’s website to leveraging



*The Semmes EDA team celebrates the city's designation as an EDA Certified Community.*



media engagement, the team learned strategies to enhance outreach and attract businesses and residents. The website is now more user-friendly and updated regularly with news and developments for the Semmes community to follow.

Lovelady noted, “We look to ensure it [a project] fits with the economic goals, that we can sustain it through resources already in place, how competitive it will be in our area, and what type of impact it will have on the community.”

Semmes has achieved significant progress in economic development through its participation in EDA, highlighted by a legislative annexation that brought 40 established businesses into the city limits, boosting revenue and strengthening the local economy. This effort included the successful recruitment of a major grocery chain and Wawa convenience store, further strengthening the city’s economic base.

The legislative annexation bill, led by Mayor Van Hook and sponsored by state Sen. Jack Williams, was presented to both the Senate and the House of Representatives. After passing both chambers, it was signed into law by Gov. Kay Ivey, taking effect on October 1, 2024. This annexation brought businesses such as an animal hospital, Hibbett Sports and Auto Zone into the corporate limits of Semmes, contributing an estimated \$750,000 in additional annual revenue. This milestone marks a significant step forward for the city’s economic vitality and growth.

Infrastructure improvements have also been a focus. The city constructed several new parks, including a dog park, pickleball courts and a splash pad, which have enhanced recreational opportunities for residents. Additionally, the community center underwent a revitalization, creating an updated space for events and activities. These investments reflect Semmes’ commitment to improving the quality of life for its residents.

To meet the demands of its growing population, Semmes has expanded its housing options with the addition of apartment complexes,

*Right: Exciting growth is happening in Semmes! From thriving plant nurseries to the addition of four new pickleball courts to the creation of the Legacy Trail Apartments, offering senior living, the city continues to expand and enhance community life.*

# semmes

make life beautiful







subdivisions, and 147 townhomes, boosting both residential availability and economic vitality. These developments are projected to be completed by the summer of 2026. Among them, the Admiral Landing subdivision is strategically located across from a Publix, currently under construction, and adjacent to a new storage facility. It is also conveniently located near the recently opened Legacy Trail senior apartment community.

Semmes has prioritized public safety in recent years, transitioning from reliance on the Mobile County Sheriff's Office for policing to establishing its own department. The city hired its first police chief, Todd Freind, in June 2021, and by 2023, the department was fully staffed with 16 officers serving the growing community.

Public safety improvements extended beyond law enforcement. The city of Semmes received \$200,000 from the Mobile County Commission's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to support its new Public Safety Complex, which houses both the fire and police departments. The funds were used to purchase critical items, including an emergency generator and training equipment for police officers and firefighters. Additional upgrades funded by ARPA included drainage work, a concrete apron for a training area, a sliding gate with fencing and awnings for both sides of the building.

Semmes currently operates three fire stations, providing fire protection and emergency services across the community. To meet the demands of rapid growth, construction began in January 2024 on a fourth station, a \$4.3 million project in the Schillinger Road area. The new facility is expected to enhance response times and provide additional resources as the city continues to expand.

The expanded public safety services and infrastructure improve the city's ability to support residents and businesses, helping to attract new development and accommodate the growing city.

For Semmes, the EDA provided the tools to identify weaknesses, develop strategies and implement solutions that have enhanced its economic sustainability. The program fostered collaboration among city leaders and offered practical insights into long-term planning, ultimately helping the city grow responsibly while maintaining its charm.

Lovelady's advice encapsulates the program's spirit: "Outline your city's attributes, challenges and goals. Know what you want and put in the work."

Semmes' progress serves as an example of what can be achieved when leadership focuses on clear goals and thoughtful planning. While every community's journey is unique, the lessons from Semmes' experience underscore the importance of preparation, teamwork and commitment to building a future that benefits the quality of life for all. ■



Left to right: Photos of Semmes Communications Director Liz Lovelady, the highly anticipated Publix grand opening and the new Semmes K-9 Korner Dog Park.



# Arab, Alabama: Reviving the Spirit of Its Founders in Modern Growth



Caroline Carter • Communications Intern • ALM

**T**hirty miles south of Huntsville, nestled on top of Brindley Mountain, is Arab, Alabama. Here lies a small city with a strong sense of community and a history of perseverance. From its origins on land once inhabited by the Cherokee Indians to its growth as a community shaped by settlers, many stories define the identity of the city we know today.

Scotch-Irish families from the Carolinas, Tennessee and Georgia first began arriving in Arab in the early 19th century. Notable pioneers included Philip Fry, who built the first log cabin in 1790, and Mace Thomas Payne Brindley, for whom the mountain is named. Joseph Thompson settled in the area in 1836, and his son, Stephen Tuttle Thompson, built the first house on Arab land in 1857. Stephen later established the Arab Post Office, naming it after his son Arad, though a clerical error changed the name to “Arab.” Arab’s story reflects a history of collaboration and progress that continues today through its participation in the Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE) program.

Arab, incorporated in 1892, is one of 45 cities in the state to have earned the Alabama Community of Excellence designation. With a population of approximately 8,800, Arab is known for its small-town charm and safe, family-friendly atmosphere. The city has become a bedroom community for Huntsville, offering a quieter lifestyle while remaining close to the metro area.

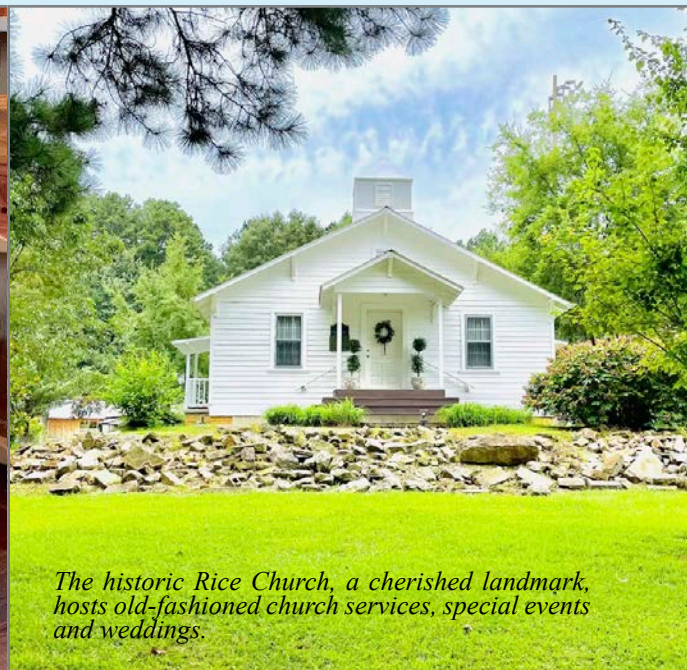
Established in 2002, ACE provides technical assistance and tools to help small cities with populations between 2,000 and 18,000 achieve long-term success. Its three-phase program brings together experts from state agencies, universities, banks and utilities to create development plans tailored to each city’s strengths and priorities. Arab applied to ACE in 2010 and became an official ACE community in 2012. Today, Mayor Bob Joslin, who was elected to the position in 2012, and Economic Development Director and Special Projects Coordinator Melissa Cook work to ensure Arab continues moving toward its ACE goals.



Although neither Mayor Joslin nor Cook were involved in creating Arab’s original strategic plan, they have worked to keep the city moving forward. Cook, who began working for the city in 2016, has used her professional



*A friendly game of checkers is one of several nostalgic items on view at Smith's Country Store in Historic Village at Arab City Park.*



*The historic Rice Church, a cherished landmark, hosts old-fashioned church services, special events and weddings.*



background to help update and manage Arab's plans. She is currently assisting the administration in maintaining the distinction between the strategic plan, which focuses on short-term, actionable goals, and the comprehensive plan, which outlines a broader, long-term vision for growth.

"When ACE came and did our strategic plan update in 2021, it was so successful. Without a doubt, it was the most community support that I have ever seen in my career experience either conducting or participating in them in three different states and 25 years of chamber and economic development experience," Cook said.

The city uses the plan to guide key projects and ensure growth does not come at the expense of its historic character. The Arab Historic Preservation Commission oversees changes in the downtown district, ensuring they align with the area's history. Recent improvements include renovating sidewalks to meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards, installing period-style lighting, adding benches and landscaping and upgrading infrastructure. The \$850,000 sidewalk renovation project was funded through a Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) phase II grant, administered by the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT). This federally funded program supports projects that improve pedestrian and cyclist safety, enhance accessibility and promotes non-motorized transportation.

Arab's investments in recreation, infrastructure and development extend beyond the downtown district. A \$9 million city park renovation modernized eight ballfields, snack stands and restrooms, turning the park into a top-tier facility for community use. A bikeway and walkway project, funded by city resources and a private benefactor, is under construction to create more green space. Traffic improvements are underway, including a \$2.7 million project to upgrade signals along U.S. Highway 231.



Top left: Arab High School students engage in hands-on learning in an advanced placement robotics class. Bottom left: Sugarfest, held annually on the Saturday of Labor Day weekend, features over 150 arts and crafts booths. Bottom right: A vibrant butterfly mural adds charm to the Fall Family Fun Fest.



Residential and retail growth reflect Arab’s appeal as a small-town alternative to urban living. This growth is balanced by a commitment to preserving the city’s identity, a priority for Arab’s leadership. Recent infrastructure investments, such as a \$2 million ALDOT grant to fund a new road supporting a major industrial project relocation, underscore the city’s strategic efforts to diversify its economy.

While challenges remain in retail recruitment due to competition from nearby cities like Guntersville, Cullman and south Huntsville, Arab’s status as an ACE city has strengthened its ability to secure funding and attract new businesses. The city’s retail trade area, encompassing approximately 53,000 people, continues to expand, drawing more opportunities year after year.

In addition to its growing retail sector, companies such as frogg toggs®, Progress Rail-CATERPILLAR®, BK Aerospace, Atrion® Medical Products, Laysan Bio, Inc., UMICORE Specialty Chemicals and WEBER-Hydraulik-HYCO have established a strong presence in the city, contributing to its local economy.

Arab’s appeal to families is strengthened by its exceptional public school system, consistently ranked among Alabama’s top-performing districts for over 25 years. Arab High School’s HOSA Future Health Professionals program, formerly Health Occupations Students of America, has earned national recognition and claimed the No. 1 ranking in the state for 39 of the past 42 years. Along with this, the district’s success extends to its pre-K program; a nationally recognized musical theater program; award-winning choral and band programs; and a wide range of athletic offerings. Arab City Schools continue to attract families and set a standard for public education in Alabama.

This dedication to excellence in education is complemented by Arab’s access to top-tier health care services. Marshall Medical Systems, which serves the entire county, was acquired by the Huntsville Hospital System, connecting Arab to world-class physicians and state-of-the-art facilities within their extensive regional and statewide health care network.

The city is actively pursuing grants for projects such as wastewater system upgrades and a new road to support industrial growth. Cook also notes that the ACE designation has not only provided valuable resources but also strengthened connections with other communities. “Being able to describe Arab as an Alabama Community of Excellence says a lot without saying anything,” she said.

Arab shows that by embracing the principles of its early settlers, a small community can grow and adapt while preserving its identity. Its partnership with ACE has opened doors to opportunity, serving as a testimony of what is possible for cities ready to invest in their future. ■

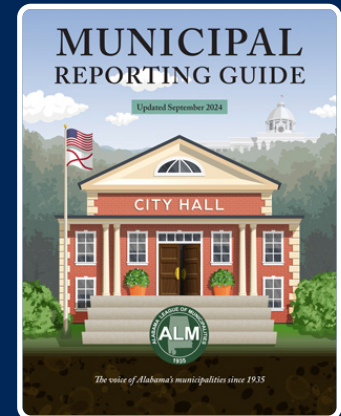
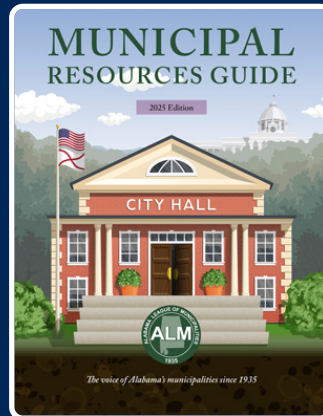


*Left: The Arab Splash Pad has become a popular, favorite summertime attraction since its opening in 2019. Right: Each year, over 450 kids take on the soccer field at Thompson Edison Park.*

## The Alabama League of Municipalities has recently updated our **Municipal Resources Guide** and **Municipal Reporting Guide**!

As part of our mission to support our members, the League created these one-stop guides to ensure our municipalities are aware of various state resources they can apply for and laws that require local governments to provide annual reports on specific municipal operations. While these guides do not include all the information about each grant program and law, they do provide an overview of the requirements, contact information and deadlines. Please reach out to any member of our team at (334) 262-2566, if you need any assistance.

Both guides are living documents that will be updated each year. Members, legislators and other elected officials are encouraged to share these great resources. They can be accessed online at [almonline.org](http://almonline.org).



## CONGRESSIONAL<sup>★</sup> 20 March CITY CONFERENCE 25 10-12

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## ALM agenda of events during the 2025 National League of Cities Congressional City Conference in Washington, D.C.

\* Some events require registration. More information can be found on the event webpage (see link below and QR code, right)

<https://almonline.org/2025ALMCongressionalCityConferenceEvents.aspx>

For more information about the NLC event, go to <https://ccc.nlc.org/>



### Sunday March 9

**4 - 6 p. m.** **Alabama Caucus Meeting and Reception**  
 Marriott Marquis - 901 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001  
 (Caucus Meeting - Room: TBD; Reception - Room: TBD)

### Monday March 10

**4 - 6 p. m.** **Adams and Reese LLP Reception** (Registration required, see link below and QR code, right)  
 Adams and Reese Offices - 20 F St. NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20001  
 (Adams and Reese reception link: [share.hsforms.com/1N8\\_tO1VlQ-WiDbEzF\\_wMwQge01i](https://share.hsforms.com/1N8_tO1VlQ-WiDbEzF_wMwQge01i))



**6:30 p. m.** **District 3 Dinner \***  
 Joe's Seafood, Prime Steak & Stone Crab - 750 15th St. NW, Washington, DC 20005 (Room: Gigi North)

**7 p. m.** **District 5 Dinner \***  
 Joe's Seafood, Prime Steak & Stone Crab - 750 15th St. NW, Washington, DC 20005 (Room: South Beach)

### Tuesday March 11

**8-10 a. m.** **Breakfast with U.S. Sen. Tuberville and Sen. Britt \***  
 Marriott Marquis - 901 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001

**6:30 p. m.** **District 1 Dinner \***  
 RPM Italian DC - 650 K St. NW, Washington, DC 20001 (Room: Sets 2 & 3)

**6:30 p. m.** **District 6 Dinner \***  
 Capital Grille - 601 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20004 (Room: TBD)

**6:30 p. m.** **District 2 Dinner \***  
 Location: TBD

**7 p. m.** **District 7 Dinner \***  
 Location: TBD

**CMO Credit:** This conference has been approved for a total of four (4) credit hours and one (1) emeritus point in the Basic, Advanced or Emeritus Certified Municipal Official Program: Delegate Caucus qualifies for two (2) credit hours and breakfast with Senators qualifies for two (2) credit hours. Officials earning Emeritus credit hours are eligible for the emeritus point. Only elected officials will be awarded credit hours in the CMO Program.

# Volkert Celebrates a Century of Integrity in Infrastructure

Steven James, CPSM • Vice President • Volkert

In 1925, the firm that would grow to be Volkert, Inc. was founded in New Orleans, Louisiana, chartered “to act as civil engineers in all kinds of work.” As Volkert celebrates the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding this year, it has become one of the leading engineering firms in Alabama and in the nation. The company’s history in Alabama began immediately after its founding. In 1926, the firm won a contract to design and build the bridges of the Mobile Bay Causeway and opened an office in Mobile. Then, during World War II, the company worked extensively at the Port of Mobile in support of the war effort and relocated its headquarters to the Port City. Still headquartered in Mobile, today Volkert is consistently ranked among the top 100 engineering firms in the nation and employs over 1,500 associates across 60 offices in 25 states.

Volkert’s growth and success over the years is attributable to its many partnerships with its clients, primarily in the public sector. Among its longest-term partnerships are those with Alabama’s cities. Volkert has worked with municipalities across the state on a wide range of projects addressing needs in transportation, water resources, recreation and education.

Shortly after relocating to Mobile, the firm provided engineering design services for the development of Mobile’s Ladd Memorial Stadium, which opened in 1948. The arena has hosted numerous concerts and high school and collegiate football games, including bowl games and the annual Senior Bowl all-star game. In 1958, The University of Alabama legend Paul “Bear” Bryant coached his first Crimson Tide game at Ladd, a loss to LSU. Now known as Ladd-Peebles Stadium, the stadium continues to host these annual HBCU football matchups, the Gulf Coast Challenge and the Port City Classic.

Volkert partnered again with the city for the development of the Mobile Regional Airport, including the design of its new terminal complex, which opened in 1986. The M.C. Farmer Terminal Building and associated facilities marked the airport’s transition from a municipal airport to a regional hub with commercial service. The new terminal was recognized with awards from the American Consulting Engineer’s Council (ACEC), the Alabama Society of Professional Engineers and the Prestressed Concrete Institute.

Beginning in the 1990s, the company established a program management practice that has overseen new school construction in municipalities in every corner of the state. The largest of these capital improvement programs was for Birmingham City Schools. At over \$500 million it was the largest such program in the history of Alabama and encompassed 40 projects that were completed ahead of schedule and within budget.

As the company grew, it also became a multidisciplinary firm to respond to the needs of Alabama’s municipal clients. Volkert’s water resources practice grew through partnerships with Mobile, Birmingham, Daphne, Saraland and many others. In 2017, the city of Fairhope Water Resource Recovery Facility received national recognition by the American Council of Engineering Companies. To accommodate its growth, Fairhope had tasked Volkert with the design of an overhaul Water Resource Recovery Facility to add capacity and enhance water quality. Volkert’s utility team designed the improvements and oversaw construction of the improved, award-winning facility.



*Ladd Memorial Stadium*



*Huffman High School, Birmingham*



*Mobile Regional Airport*



One of the ways Volkert has assisted cities in Alabama is through the procurement and administration of federal grants for municipal improvements. For example, Volkert partnered with the city of Foley to develop planning documents and support grant applications that led to a multi-phase program of roadway, streetscape and pedestrian improvements. The centerpieces of the program were a \$5 million Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant and a Master Pedestrian Plan to reshape Foley’s historic town center. Completed in 2018, the elegant pedestrian bridge crossing Alabama Highway 59, designed by Volkert, now serves as a local landmark while also connecting the community’s improved pedestrian facilities.



*Foley Pedestrian Bridge*

The company’s ability to provide a full range of engineering and professional services has enabled its municipal partners to accomplish complex projects within environmental and urban constraints. In Gulf Shores, Volkert was the program manager for the revitalization of Gulf Place. Completed in 2019, the multi-phase revitalization project provided improved beach access, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, public event and activities space, and complete streets and streetscape improvements. Due to the environmentally sensitive nature of the sites along the pristine Gulf of Mexico beaches, Volkert coordinated with multiple agencies at the local, state and federal levels to develop a comprehensive strategy for monitoring the surrounding ecologies and minimizing the impact of revitalization activities on the surrounding areas. Beach dune restoration was incorporated into the design to provide habitat and protection from storm surge.



*Broadstreet in Mobile*

Recently, Volkert renewed its oldest municipal partnership in Alabama through “One Mobile: Reconnecting People, Work, and Play through Complete Streets.” Volkert assisted with planning for and obtaining a \$14 million TIGER grant to redevelop the streetscapes of key corridors surrounding Mobile’s historic downtown. Volkert then designed the project which provides safe, pedestrian-friendly and bicycle-friendly access; reconnects severed neighborhoods; accommodates all modes of travel; and creates attractive, welcoming and cohesive streetscapes.

Volkert’s century of growth and success is rooted in its Alabama home and its partnership with the state’s municipalities. While the company has expanded to 25 states and now works with state and federal agencies on multi-billion-dollar projects across the nation, it has continued to maintain its commitment to and relationships with the municipalities of Alabama. Volkert continues to serve dozens of cities and towns across the state on projects large and small. With nearly 300 employees in offices in Mobile, Birmingham, Huntsville, Gulf Shores, Daphne, Tuscaloosa and Montgomery, its cities are not just Volkert’s headquarters but also its home. ■



*Fairhope Water Resource Recovery Facility*



*Gulf Place*



# Strengthening Municipal Health:

A Partnership Between Local Gov Health + Wellness and the Alabama League of Municipalities

Michelle Walden • Communications Director, Local Gov Health + Wellness

In the ever-changing world of health care, it is important that city workers have access to affordable and comprehensive health insurance. Local Gov Health + Wellness (Local Gov) administers the health insurance benefits for 230 municipalities and around 120 water authorities and sewer boards, covering more than 26,000 employees and their families throughout Alabama. Since starting in 1993, Local Gov has offered strong and affordable health insurance for local government employees. The program has consistently provided top benefits, with an annual rate increase of just 4.2% for the 32 years Local Gov has provided health insurance to municipalities. Local Gov works with the Alabama League of Municipalities (ALM) to support municipalities and their affiliated authorities, including water boards and housing authorities, across Alabama.

## A Shared Vision for Health and Well-being

Both ALM and Local Gov share a vision of promoting, strengthening, and improving the quality of life for our members and the municipalities we both serve. Our board of directors consists of nine volunteers, with three appointed by the ALM. Using the combined expertise of our leaders, our organization aims to be more than just a health insurance plan; we are a committed partner dedicated to enhancing the lives of employees and their families.

We provide a comprehensive health insurance plan that includes medical, pharmaceutical, dental, mental health, wellness programs and more. Our goal is to ensure employees receive the care they need without financial stress, addressing their needs at every life stage. Some of the free innovative programs included with our plan are:

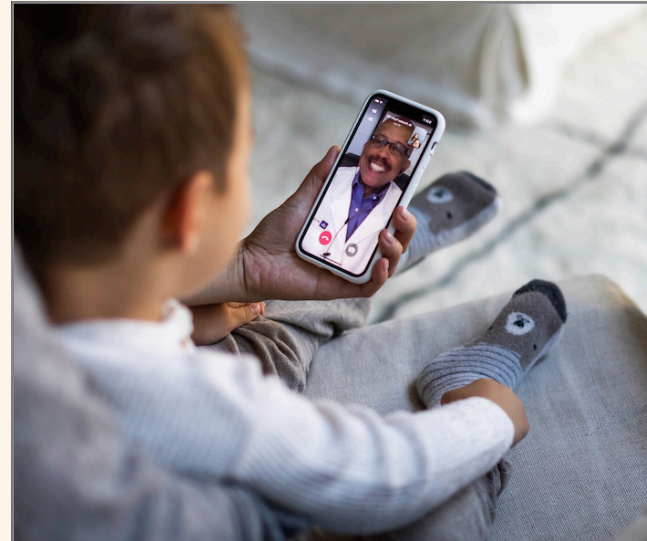
- **Hinge Health:** a virtual physical therapy program
- **Doctor On Demand:** a 24/7 telehealth service for medical, behavioral health and dermatology
- **Virta:** a program for prediabetes and Type 2 diabetes reversal
- **Baby Yourself:** a maternity management program

## Looking Ahead: A Commitment to Continuous Improvement

As health care needs continue to evolve, we remain committed to working alongside our municipalities and other units, continuously adapting and improving our offerings.

The partnership between Local Gov and ALM exemplifies how working together and sharing a vision can lead to big improvements in health insurance. By working together, our organizations not only provide valuable benefits to municipal employees but also contribute to the overall health and well-being of communities across Alabama.

For more information about the health insurance benefits offered by Local Gov Health + Wellness, please visit [www.lghip.org](http://www.lghip.org) or scan the QR code. ■







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## RECENT DELIVERIES



### Palmerdale Fire District

CHASSIS: Rosenbauer General  
BODY: Pumper  
ENGINE: Cummins L9  
HORSEPOWER: 400 hp  
PUMP: Waterous  
GPM: 1500 gpm  
TANK: 1000 gallons

### North Chilton Fire Department

CHASSIS: Ford F550 4x4 Super Cab  
BODY: Mini-Pumper  
ENGINE: Powerstroke 6.7L V-8, Diesel  
HORSEPOWER: 330 hp  
PUMP: Waterous  
GPM: 1500 gpm  
TANK: 300 gallons



### Smiths Station

CHASSIS: Rosenbauer Commander  
BODY: Pumper  
ENGINE: Cummins L9  
HORSEPOWER: 450 hp  
PUMP: Rosenbauer N  
GPM: 1250 gpm  
TANK: 1000 gallons



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## Make plans to join the League for training in 2025!

- **February 12**  
Legislative Advocacy Day, Montgomery. Reception to follow.
- **March 8 - 12**  
NLC Congressional City Conference, Washington, D.C. (Learn more: [www.nlc.org](http://www.nlc.org))
- **May 13 - 16**  
Annual Convention and Expo, Huntsville
- **August**  
ALM In-State Congressional Luncheons (locations and dates TBD)
- **October /November**  
Regional Orientation Trainings, several locations around the state  
(October 1-2, Tuscaloosa; October 29-30, Montgomery;  
November 5-6, Huntsville; November 12-13, Daphne)
- **November 19 - 22**  
NLC City Summit, Salt Lake City, UT (Learn more: [www.nlc.org](http://www.nlc.org))

**SAVE**

**THE**

**DATE!**

2025 CMO Training Calendar

**Visit [www.almonline.org/UpcomingTraining](http://www.almonline.org/UpcomingTraining) frequently for training and updated registration information.**





# The League Team Welcomes New Staff



## Mikal Webb, Associate Counsel

Mikal joined the League staff as an associate counsel in January 2025 and is responsible for advising municipal officials and employees from more than 450 member cities and towns, writing legal articles and addressing municipal officials, employees and attorneys on municipal matters. Additionally, he will assist with the League's lobbying efforts. In law school, Mikal served as an articles editor for the Faulkner Law Review, as the finance chair for the Board of Advocates and as a law clerk with the Alabama Fifteenth Judicial Circuit Court. In these capacities, Mikal honed his skills in legal research and writing to provide valuable information to decision makers.

A Montgomery native, Mikal earned his B.A. from Huntingdon College in 2018, a M.A. from the University of Alabama in 2021 and his J.D. from the Thomas Goode Jones School of Law in 2024. Prior to entering the legal profession, Mikal spent time teaching mathematics at the collegiate and high school levels.

In his spare time, Mikal enjoys visiting coffee shops, reading, exercising and spending time with family and friends.



## Annabel Patton, Receptionist

Annabel joined the League team in September of 2024 and has enjoyed her position at the front desk as the receptionist. Annabel is originally from Carrollton, Georgia but moved to Prattville in July of 2024. She is a graduate from the University of Georgia and still enjoys traveling back to Athens for some football games. In her free time, she enjoys traveling, crocheting, reading and has recently started playing pickleball! She is a devoted animal lover and is always finding time to spend with her dog and two cats.





# Identifying and Mitigating Buckets of Risk in Municipal Government

Sean Duke • President • AMIC

**M**unicipalities, like most of us, face the difficult task of identifying risk. Key risk categories—such as property, auto, law enforcement, commercial crime and general liability—must first be clearly quantified. Visualize those risks as water filling up a bucket.

Now that you have identified and quantified your risks, you need to take steps, if possible, to mitigate your risks and avoid some clumsy oaf, like me, knocking your bucket over and spilling it all out for you to clean up!

The most common mitigation strategy utilized is insurance. Insurance is defined in Alabama statute as: “A contract whereby one undertakes to indemnify another or pay or provide a specified amount or benefit upon determinable contingencies.” To put it more plainly, an insurance company, like the Alabama Municipal Insurance Corporation, may be contracted to take some risk from your bucket and hold it on its own.

There are, however, risks that cannot be addressed through insurance.

That means, the “buckets” of risk that the insurance company can take on will be smaller than your bucket of risk.

Many factors can influence how much risk you, as a municipality, can transfer to an insurance company. The most common, of course, is price/premium. What the municipality can afford to transfer often dictates how much is transferred or, to continue with our analogy, how big the insurer’s bucket is. At the same time, an insurance company will limit their bucket size based on their financials and appetite for risk. Other factors are public policy and moral hazards; not all risks can be transferred to an insurance company. Think speeding ticket insurance – how great would it be to have speeding ticket insurance? What incentive would there be to obey posted speed limits? You cannot find such a product because that type of insurance cannot be written due to public policy and moral hazard issues.

However, there are other types of risk in your big bucket that are not transferred to insurance companies. Over the years, insurance companies have gone to extraordinary lengths to identify risks that are just too great to assume. These types of risks are found in your policies as terms, conditions, limiting definitions and coverage exclusions (the dreaded “e” word), all of which limit the amount of risk the insurer is willing, or capable,



of assuming. Policies adopted from the Insurance Services Office, the leading provider of underwriting forms for the United States in the property and casualty market, contain these exclusions.

Policyholders are often surprised at situations where their actions, which they may have legitimate legal or business reasons for doing, impact coverage negatively. For example, many cities have personnel policies that prohibit employees from using narcotics, even if prescribed by a doctor, and prohibit employees from operating city vehicles under the influence. Who could argue with such a policy? Nevertheless, it is an example of how adopting a good policy could lead to an uninsured risk if, regardless of the policy, an employee operates a municipal vehicle while under the influence. Indeed, property damage under such a scenario could be covered, while the employee's (likely former at that point!) liability is left uncovered.

Of course, municipalities should not avoid the adoption of sound policies for fear of an insurance claim. I cannot stress enough how important it is that proper drug and alcohol policies are adopted. The passage of the Alabama medical cannabis program emphasizes the need for every municipality to revisit its personnel policies to address the risks associated with employee use of a controlled substance and the related liability insurance implications under its personnel policies. The law provides employers several ways to identify employees with medical cannabis prescriptions so they may mitigate the risks associated with the employee's use of a controlled substance. Every municipality is encouraged to consult their attorney to determine what changes, if any, should be made to their personnel policy to address the exposure. Testing post-accident is a good policy. Unfortunately, insurance coverage may have already been affected at that point.




**Policies can be enhanced by adding the following testing programs:**

- **Fitness-For-Duty:** Established for those employees who, based on their job requirements, must undergo scheduled medical examinations.
- **Reasonable Suspicion:** Required when it is believed that an employee is or has used alcohol or drugs in violation of policy. It must be based on specific objectives, articulable facts and reasonable inferences.
- **Post Rehabilitation Testing:** Regularly scheduled testing is required for any employee who is permitted to return to work following completion of rehabilitation related to substance abuse.

To sum things up, no policy can be enacted to negate all risk, just as no insurance policy can be written to cover every potential exposure. Your “bucket” of exposure will always be larger than what you can transfer. That is why every municipality must perform periodic risk assessments to identify potential uninsured exposures as part of your risk management strategy. ■

**Additional information on establishing a drug-free workplace is available from the Alabama Department of Labor by scanning the QR code.**



*Sean Duke was named president of the Alabama Municipal Insurance Corporation (AMIC) in March 2022. Sean is a 1993 graduate of Auburn University Montgomery with a bachelor's degree in finance. He spent five years in the mortgage industry, primarily in mortgage pools and cash flow operations data evaluation. Sean then spent 24 years in the insurance regulatory industry as an insurance examiner with the Alabama Department of Insurance, involving financial and market conduct examinations and analysis of insurance and insurance related entities as well as company licensing and alternative risk. When Sean became AMIC's third president, he brought extensive knowledge of Alabama's insurance regulatory framework, laws, regulations and bulletins from his years of service to the state of Alabama.*



# CYBERSECURITY RESOURCES FOR ALABAMA COMMUNITIES

TUCKER SIMPSON | CYBERSECURITY RESEARCH ENGINEER AND PROJECT MANAGER | MCCRARY INSTITUTE FOR CYBER AND CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE



**A**re you looking for stronger cybersecurity practices for your municipality? The State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program (SLCGP) and the Alabama Cybersecurity Intelligence Center (ACIC) can help solve your needs. Recent years have increased the urgency and need for advanced cybersecurity capabilities, which you may find yourself needing help with at the local level.

The overarching goal of Alabama’s SLCGP program is to raise the collective cybersecurity posture of our state by assisting local governments in determining their current cybersecurity readiness level, identifying key areas of improvement or enhancement, and providing pathways which enable entities to acquire the necessary resources to strengthen their systems and processes.



## State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program Overview

In 2021, the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), was signed into law. One component of the act is the SLCGP, which appropriated \$1 billion over four rounds of funding to address cybersecurity risks and threats to information systems owned or operated by, or on behalf of, state, local or tribal governments (SLT). Alabama was allocated approximately \$19 million.

The Alabama Office of Information Technology (OIT) is the program’s State Administrative Agency (SAA) and serves as fiscal agent, authorizing official and administering of sub-recipient grants, as well as being the subject matter expert pertaining to programmatic requirements and federal regulations of the SLCGP. The office has established an Alabama Cybersecurity Planning Committee, an Alabama Cybersecurity Plan and foundational projects to implement.

Troy University and Auburn University’s McCrary Institute for Cyber and Critical Infrastructure Security joined OIT to collectively accomplish SAA purposes. Troy University provides administration and management of programmatic, reporting and training components, while Auburn University’s McCrary Institute oversees cybersecurity functions and activities.

Currently, round one of funding has \$3.07 million available (spread over FY22 - FY25) and the SAA has successfully secured a matching cost-share waiver of 10%. Round two has \$6.27 million available (spread over FY23 - FY26) and the SAA has successfully secured a matching cost-share waiver of 20%. Round three has \$4.61 million available (spread over FY24-FY27) and has a pending matching cost-share waiver request of 30%.

## Online Application

To apply, a local government entity (LGE) can submit an application for eligible projects. Answer each question and select desired projects to the best of your ability. Each project will be available and approved on a first-come, first-served basis and includes only one-time cybersecurity services. As of this release, a LGE will not receive direct grant monies but will receive services and resources through the SAA, allowing the state to provide more with limited grant funding.

Visit <https://slcgp.alabama.gov/apply/> by scanning the QR code to find the full details about the program and to apply. An SAA member will schedule a call to discuss selected projects which are subject to approval by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA).



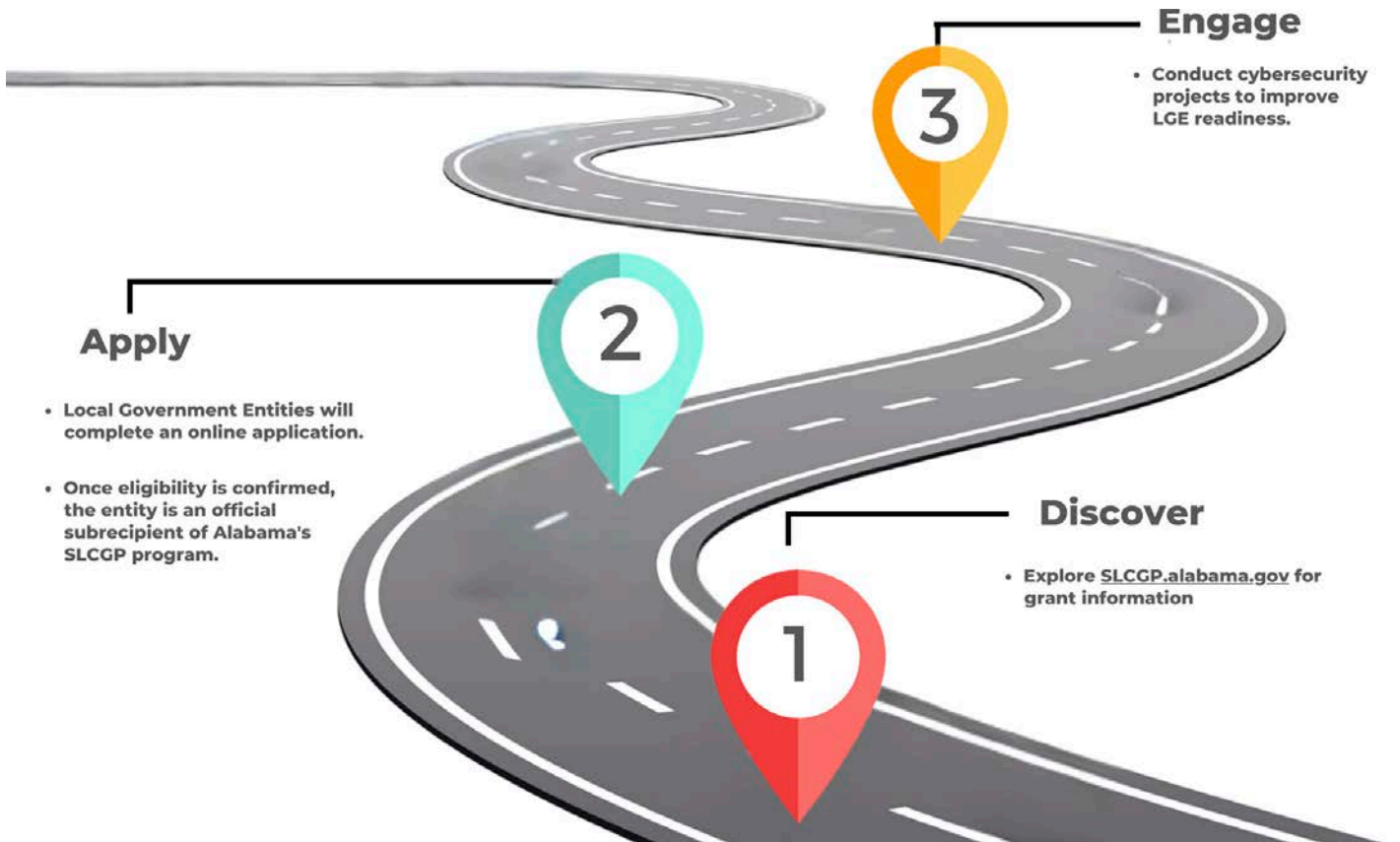
## Alabama Cybersecurity Intelligence Center (ACIC)

For better protection of LGE endpoints and networks, OIT and the McCrary Institute are preparing to launch ACIC in 2025. ACIC will be a centralized hub for cybersecurity in our state.

### ACIC will help make Alabama safer from cyberattacks by enhancing one LGE at a time through the following capabilities:

- **Cyber Threat Intelligence and Information Sharing**
- **Endpoint Detection and Response**
- **Log Management and Analysis via Security Information and Event Management (SIEM) Software**
- **Incident Response**
- **Digital Forensics**
- **Cyber Tabletop Exercises**
- **Workforce Development**
- **Open-Source Analysis**

If you need assistance applying for SLCGP funding or learning more about ACIC, please contact [slcginfo@alabama.gov](mailto:slcginfo@alabama.gov) or the Alabama League of Municipalities' director of information technology, Chuck Stephenson, at [cstephenson@almonline.org](mailto:cstephenson@almonline.org). Stephenson serves as an appointee on the Alabama Cybersecurity Planning Committee.







# It's that simple.

AMFund was created to assist Alabama's cities and towns to obtain affordable financing for almost any size municipal project. If you are considering AMFund as financing for your project, check out our website -

[www.amfund.com](http://www.amfund.com)

- and look over our Frequently Asked Questions page. If your question is not answered, feel free to email us with questions regarding your particular situation.



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**Richard Buttenshaw**  
President, MWCF  
P.O. Box 1270  
Montgomery, AL 36102  
334-262-2566

**Terry Young**  
Marketing Manager, MWCF  
P.O. Box 43769  
Birmingham, AL 35243  
1-888-736-0210  
email: [tyoung@mrm-llc.com](mailto:tyoung@mrm-llc.com)