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ALABAMA POLITICS... CAMPAIGN 2026 WHO'S Running?



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Governor Kay Ivey Lays Out Agenda For Her Last Legislative Session

January 13, 2026 – Alabama Governor Kay Ivey (R) delivered her ninth and final State of the State address as the Alabama Legislature opens the 2026 regular session ahead of the 2026 Republican and Democratic primaries on May 19 to elect new leadership.

"My fellow Alabamians! The momentum is in our sails in Alabama – and we are not done yet!" declared Governor Ivey.

"Today marks my 10th Regular Session as governor," said Gov. Ivey. "Since then, we have seen investments totaling \$69 billion which has created 100,000 jobs – and counting! Alabama consistently ranks among the top 10 states for doing business." Governor Ivey highlighted the announcement that Space Command was coming to Huntsville as well as the Eli Lilly Medicine, Mazda Toyota Manufacturing, First Solar, Meta, and Novelis announcements.

GOV. IVEY ALSO TOUTED HER ROLE AS A ROADBUILDER.

"Since 2019, Alabama generated more than \$2 billion dollars, paving the way for 500 vital road and bridge projects in all 67 counties," said Ivey. "None of these projects would have happened without the passage of Rebuild Alabama," (Gov. Ivey's 2019 tax increase on fuel).

SHE ALSO HIGHLIGHTED HER RECORD ON BROADBAND EXPANSION.

"When we first decided to invest in high-speed internet, Alabama ranked near the bottom when it came to broadband connectivity. Today, we are 24th. And with our state plan, 100 percent of Alabama will soon have access through an internet service provider."

Ivey also touted her changes to Alabama's government structure.

"We consolidated our new Department of Workforce, and in only its first year, we have taken 25,000 workers off the sidelines," said Ivey. "We gave veterans a stronger voice and moved the Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs into the Governor's Cabinet."

THE GOVERNOR TOUTED HER RECORD ON FAMILIES.

"We are supporting Alabama families: From our record 6,000 plus foster care adoptions...to our CHOOSE Act education savings accounts...to paid parental leave for teachers."

PRISONS ARE A LARGE PART OF GOV. IVEY'S LEGACY.

"We are nearing the completion of construction on the new men's prison in Elmore County and are pressing forward with work on the Escambia facility, all while recruiting a record number of corrections officers," said Ivey.

IVEY HAS PUSHED AN AGGRESSIVE EFFORT TO REFORM ALABAMA'S HISTORICALLY DREADFUL PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS.

"When I took office in 2017, Alabama's education system needed immediate attention," said Ivey. (After the failed adoption of new Common Core standards)

"In 4th grade math, we ranked dead last at 52nd. In 4th grade reading, we were 49th." "We are now 32nd in math and 34th in reading. We ranked first in the nation in math recovery and third in reading. We significantly increased our pre-k classrooms. We are a top five state for computer science. We doubled the specialty schools with the addition of the Cyber Technology and Engineering School and the Alabama School of Healthcare Sciences. We have our highest ever College and Career Readiness rate. We are tied for the lowest percentage of chronic absenteeism. Our teachers are earning high marks. And we added 500,000 more credentials men and women to our workforce."

GOV. IVEY WANTS TO CRACK DOWN ON CRIME EVEN FURTHER.

"Our work is never done when it comes to protecting our citizens," said Ivey. "Representative Matt Simpson and Senator April Weaver will carry a bill to impose the death penalty for those who rape or sodomize a child. I was proud to quickly offer my full and total support." "It is time we crack down on that reckless, criminal behavior and pass a bill led by Representative Reed Ingram and Senator Lance Bel," said Ivey. "In Alabama, we enforce the law, and I look

forward to this bill reaching my desk." "Here at home in Montgomery, I directed the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency to increase trooper presence," said Ivey. "Between our specialized Metro Area Crime Suppression Unit and this larger law enforcement footprint, we are adding to our efforts in Montgomery."

GOV. IVEY ASKED THE LEGISLATURE TO GIVE STATE EMPLOYEES A TWO PERCENT ACROSS THE BOARD PAY RAISE.

IVEY ALSO MENTIONED HEALTHCARE – AN AREA WHERE LITTLE HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED IN THE LAST NINE YEARS.

"We recently learned Alabama will receive more than \$203 million dollars in first-year (federal) funding from the Rural Health Transformation Program," said Ivey. "This program, over five years, will kickstart efforts to improve health care in rural America. Our plan approved by the Trump Administration lists 11 initiatives to boost rural healthcare delivery."

THE STATE HAS ENJOYED TEN YEARS OF INCREASING REVENUES. Lawmakers are concerned that trend could change in the near term. There is also concern of increased natural disasters.

"Representative Chip Brown and Senator Steve Livingston will carry legislation to ensure we have a statewide resilience plan," said Ivey. "Every Alabamian is worthy of a resilient community when disaster strikes." "Unfortunately, Alabama is no stranger to the wrath of Mother Nature." "I am launching a statewide flood notification system that will be in place for this summer," said Ivey. "I am also calling on the Legislature to fund this notification system moving forward. We cannot put our young people at risk!"

SCHOOL SHOOTINGS ARE ALSO A GROWING AREA OF CONCERN.

"We must also protect our young Alabamians in school," said Ivey. "That is why I am proposing an additional \$50 million dollars for K-12 safety efforts."

THE STATE ALSO HAS A GROWING NEED FOR NEW TEACHERS.

"Senator Matt Woods and Representative Rick Rehm are putting forward a bill to create a temporary teaching certificate pathway for qualified veterans," said Ivey. "I fully endorse this measure and look forward to this bill reaching my desk." Ivey said that she is committed to, "Making Alabama the most school choice friendly state in the nation" and is asking the Legislature to increase funding for the CHOOSE ACT to \$250 million dollars.

THE ALABAMA HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETICS ASSOCIATION HAS ACTIVELY OPPOSED THE LEGISLATURE'S EFFORTS.

Ivey is supporting legislation by Representative Danny Garrett and Senator Clyde Chambliss – "The Let the Kids Play Act" to make sure no family benefitting from the CHOOSE Act is unfairly benched again."

IVEY ALSO ANNOUNCED THAT SHE WANTS A TWO PERCENT PAY INCREASE FOR TEACHERS AND EDUCATION EMPLOYEES.

"Representative Jeana Ross, is putting forward a bill with Senator Donnie Chesteen to limit screen time for children five and younger in publicly funded early learning centers," said Ivey. "House Bill 78 will help our youngest."

It remains to be seen how many of the Governor's priorities will be turned into law.

To comment or to ask a question email: brandonmreporter@gmail.com

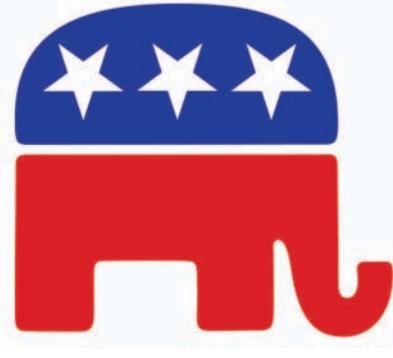
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Dozens of Republican Candidates Have Qualified For Public Office Already



January 14, 2026 – MONTGOMERY – Candidate qualifying for the 2026 election is well underway and the Republican Party has had dozens of candidates qualify for office. The GOP holds both Senate seats, five of the seven congressional seats, all the constitutional statewide offices, all of the appellate judgeships, and supermajories in both Houses of the Alabama Legislature. Holding on to that power requires good candidates who are willing to put the work in raising money and meeting with people on the campaign trail. The Alabama Republican Party hopes that they get that level of participation in the election process in the 2026 field.

Listed below are the Republican candidates who qualified as of press time – qualifying has not closed yet and is an ongoing process.

U.S. Senate

Steve Marshall

Rodney Walker

(Congressman **Barry Moore** has stated that he will qualify on Friday, Jan 16) **Morgan Murphy** has also announced but has not yet qualified.)

U.S. House of Representatives

District 1 – Jerry Carl

District 1 – James “Jimmy” Dees

District 2 – Hampton Harris

District 3 – Mike Rogers

(In CD3 **Terri LePoint** has announced but has not yet qualified.)

District 4 – Robert B. Aderholt

District 5 – Dale W. Strong

District 6 – Gary Palmer

District 7 – there is no qualified

Republican candidate and we are not aware of a formally announced candidate.

Governor

Thomas Tuberville

(Ken McFeeters has announced but has not yet qualified)

Lt. Governor

Nicole Jones Wadsworth

(Rick Pate, Patrick Bishop, and Wes Allen are all announced candidates but have not yet qualified.)

Attorney General

Jay Mitchell

Katherine Robertson

(District Attorney **Pamela Casey** is an announced candidate for AG but has not yet formally qualified.)

Secretary of State

Caroleene Dobson

State Treasurer

Young Boozer

Steve Lolley

State Auditor

Derek Chen

Andrew Sorrell

(**Josh Pendergrass** is an announced candidate for auditor, but has not yet qualified.)

Commissioner of Agriculture & Industry

Corey Hill

Christina Woerner McInnis

(**Jack Williams** is an announced candidate but has not yet qualified.)

Public Service Commissioner

Place 1

Matt Gentry

(Incumbent **Jeremy Oden** has announced but has not yet qualified)

Public Service Commissioner, Place 2

(Incumbent **Chris Beeker III** has announced but has not qualified yet. **Brent Woodall** similarly has announced but has not yet qualified)

Associate Justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, Place 7

Brad Mendheim

Associate Justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, Place 8

Greg Shaw

Alabama Court of Civil Appeals Place 4

Benjamin M. Bowden

Alabama Court of Civil Appeals Place 5

Matt Fridy

Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals, Place 4
Mary Windom

Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals, Place 5
Beth Kellum

State Board of Education District 2
Tracie West

State Board of Education District 6
Cathi Bradford

State Board of Education District 8
Connie Spears
Emily Jones

Circuit Judge, Circuit 6 Place 7 – Dennis Stevenson, Sr.

Circuit Judge, Circuit 7 Place 4 – Peggy P. Miller Lacher

Circuit Judge, Circuit 14 Place 1 – Joeletta Barrentine

Circuit Judge, Circuit 19 Place 5 – Carol Cook Carter
Ali Patterson

Circuit Judge, Circuit 20 Place 5 – Todd Derrick

Circuit Judge, Circuit 23 Place 2
Alison Strickland Austin

Circuit Judge, Circuit 25 Place 1 – Daryl Burt

Circuit Judge, Circuit 28 Place 5 – Laurie Hoyt

Circuit Judge, Circuit 28 Place 7 – Kristi Hagood

Circuit Judge, Circuit 28 Place 7 – William “Liam” Scully

Circuit Judge, Circuit 37 Place 4 – Seth H. Donaldson

Circuit Judge, Circuit 38 Place 2 – Brent Benson

District Judge, Baldwin County Place 1 – Ashley W. Siebert

District Judge, Cherokee County Place 1 – Wes Mobley

District Judge, Cleburne County Place 1 – Melody Walker

District Judge, Crenshaw County Place 1 – Jon M. Folmar

District Judge, Dale County Place 1 – Stan Garner, Jr.

District Judge, Dale County Place 1 –

Samantha Rhoades Valenzuela

District Judge, Elmore County Place 1 – Ben Baxley

District Judge, Elmore County Place 2 – Desirae Lewis

District Judge, Elmore County Place 2 –

Dwight “Tray” M. Richardson III

District Judge, Escambia County Place 1 – Eric Coale

District Judge, Jackson County Place 1 – Matt Mitchell

District Judge, Madison County Place 1 – Tim Douthit

District Judge, Madison County Place 4 – John R. Allen

District Judge, Madison County Place 5 – Jeanne Dowdle Rizzardi

District Judge, Marshall County Place 2 – Zach Ross

District Judge, Morgan County Place 1 – Scott A. Slate

District Judge, Pickens County Place 1 – John Morgan Owens

District Judge, Pickens County Place 1 – John Russell

District Judge, Shelby County Place 3 – Ben Fuller

District Judge, Shelby County Place 3 – Mark Wilson

District Judge, St. Clair County Place 2 – Robert L. Minor

District Judge, Talladega County Place 1 – J. Scott Brewer

District Judge, Talladega County Place 1 – Huel M. Love III

District Judge, Talladega County Place 2 – Nicholas J. Beckham

District Judge, Talladega County Place 2 – Dale Price

District Judge, Tallapoosa County Place 1 – Donald “Chad” Harrison

District Judge, Walker County Place 1 – Henry Allred

Alabama State Senate, District 1
Tim Melson

Alabama State Senate, District 2
John Roberts

Alabama State Senate, District 4
Garlan Gudger

Alabama State Senate, District 5
Matt Woods

Alabama State Senate, District 6
Sam Givhan

Alabama State Senate, District 7
Steve Livingston

Alabama State Senate, District 8
Wes Kitchens

Alabama State Senate, District 9
Jesse Battles

Alabama State Senate, District 10
Andrew Jones

Alabama State Senate, District 11
Amy Dozier Minton

Alabama State Senate, District 12
Lance Bell

Alabama State Senate, District 13
Keith Kelley

Alabama State Senate, District 14
Randy Price

Alabama State Senate, District 15
April Weaver

Alabama State Senate, District 16
J.T. “Jabo” Waggoner

Alabama State Senate, District 17
Shay Shelnutt

Alabama State Senate, District 22
Greg Albritton

Alabama State Senate, District 26
Will Barfoot

Alabama State Senate, District 27
Doug Cannon

Alabama State Senate, District 29
Jay Hovey

Alabama State Senate, District 30
Zachary J. Hurst

Alabama State Senate, District 32
Clyde Chambliss, Jr.

Alabama State Senate, District 34
Rusty Glover

Alabama State Senate, District 38
Doug Harwel

Alabama House of Representatives, District 2 – Ben Harrison

Alabama House of Representatives, District 3 – Kerry Bubba Underwood

Alabama House of Representatives, District 4 – Parker Duncan Moore

Alabama House of Representatives, District 5 – Danny F. Crawford

Alabama House of Representatives, District 7 – Angelo Doc Mancuso

Alabama House of Representatives, District 8 – Ernie Yarbrough

Alabama House of Representatives, District 9 – Scott Stadthagen

Alabama House of Representatives, District 10 – Aaron Thomas

Alabama House of Representatives, District 11 – Heath Albright

Alabama House of Representatives, District 12 – Cindy Myrex

Alabama House of Representatives, District 13 – Greg Barnes

Alabama House of Representatives, District 14 – Tim R. Wadsworth

Alabama House of Representatives, District 15 – Leigh Hulsey

Alabama House of Representatives, District 16 – Bryan Brinyark

Alabama House of Representatives, District 17 – Micheal Beck

Alabama House of Representatives, District 23 – Mike Kirkland

Alabama House of Representatives, District 25 – Phillip K. Rigsby

Alabama House of Representatives, District 26 – Brock Colvin

Alabama House of Representatives, District 27 – Jeana Ross

Alabama House of Representatives, District 28 – Mack N. Butler

Alabama House of Representatives, District 29 – Mark A. Gidley

Alabama House of Representatives, District 30 – Craig Lipscomb

Alabama House of Representatives, District 31 – Troy B. Stubbs

Alabama House of Representatives, District 33 – Ben Robbins

Alabama House of Representatives, District 34 – David Standridge

Alabama House

Democrats Are Fielding a Full Slate Of 2026 Candidates



January 14, 2026 - MONTGOMERY — Alabama Democrats are entering the 2026 election cycle with one of their largest and most geographically diverse slates in more than a decade, qualifying candidates for every federal office on the ballot and dozens of state legislative, judicial, and constitutional positions. The party's lineup includes past office holders, returning incumbents to majority minority districts, and first-time contenders aiming to expand Democratic competitiveness across the breadth and length of the state of Alabama.

Former U.S. Senator Doug Jones is the best known candidate to qualify. He faces a crowded field that includes: Chad "Chig" Martin, Yolanda Flowers (who was the 2022 Democratic nominee for Governor), and Pastor Will Boyd – who ran for Senate in 2022.

Democrats have three candidates for U.S. Senate, a full slate of seven congressional hopefuls, and contested primaries for governor, lieutenant governor, and several legislative districts.

This is the Democratic field - as of press time:

Federal Races U.S. Senate

Three Democrats qualified for the open U.S. Senate seat:

- Dakarai Larriett
- Kyle Sweetser
- Mark S. Wheeler II

U.S. House of Representatives

Democrats fielded candidates in all seven congressional districts:

- AL 01: Clyde W. Jones, Jr.
- AL 02: Shomari C. Figures (incumbent)
- AL 03: Lee McInnis
- AL 04: Amanda N. Puscak
- AL 05: Andrew Sneed
- AL 06: Keith Pilkington
- AL 07: Terri A. Sewell (incumbent)

Statewide Constitutional Offices

Democrats qualified candidates for every statewide office on the 2026 ballot:

- Governor:
Will Boyd, Yolanda Rochelle Flowers, Doug Jones, Chad "Chig" Martin
- Lieutenant Governor:
Phillip Ensler
- Secretary of State: Wayne Rogers
- State Auditor: Violet Edwards
- Commissioner of Agriculture & Industries: Ron Sparks

The gubernatorial primary is expected to draw significant attention, with four candidates representing different wings of the party and varying levels of statewide experience.

Republicans have supermajorities in both Houses of the Legislature; but Democrats are targeting a number of GOP held seats in the Legislature this time around.

Alabama Senate

Democrats qualified candidates in key districts across the state, including several contested primaries:

- District 2: Rudolph Valentino Drake, Alex House, Guy Sotomayor
- District 3: John Dickey
- District 6: Bobby Martin
- District 11: Donald J. Mottern
- District 19: Merika Coleman
- District 20: Linda Coleman Madison
- District 23: Robert Stewart
- District 24: Bobby Singleton
- District 25: Kirk Hatcher, KK Middleton
- District 28: Billy Beasley
- District 33: Vivian Davis Figures

Alabama House of Representatives

The Democratic slate for the Alabama

House includes incumbents, community leaders, and new challengers. Several districts feature competitive primaries:

- District 5: Jessie Barcala
- District 10: Marilyn Lands
- District 15: Nell Brown
- District 19: Laura Hall
- District 28: Robert Louis Hunter
- District 32: Debra D. Foster
- District 40: Pam Howard
- District 43: Taylor Cook
- District 45: Toni Kornegay Vaughn
- District 47: Jim Toomey
- District 54: Neil Rafferty
- District 55: Travis Hendrix
- District 56: Ontario J. Tillman
- District 57: Shamyia Atkins, Mara Ruffin Blackmon, Patrick Sellers
- District 58: Rolanda Hollis
- District 59: Mary Moore
- District 60: Juandalynn Givan, Alicia Escott Lumpkin, Nina Taylor
- District 67: Prince Chestnut
- District 68: Thomas E. "Action" Jackson
- District 69: Kelvin J. Lawrence, Marsha R. Madison
- District 70: Christopher John England
- District 71: Artis (A.J.) McCampbell
- District 72: Curtis L. Travis, Michael Williams
- District 74: Jasmyne Crimiel
- District 75: Tisha Dickson Nickson
- District 76: Patrice "Penni" McClammy

- District 77: TaShina Morris
- District 78: Kenyatté Hassell
- District 80: Manfred Malone
- District 82: Sidney "Doc" Brown, Terrence K. Johnson, Pebblin W. Warren
- District 83: Jeremy A. Gray
- District 84: Berry Forte
- District 97: Adline C. Clarke
- District 98: Napoleon Bracy, Jr.
- District 99: Sam Jones
- District 101: Joan Friedlander
- District 103: Barbara Drummond

Judicial Races

Democrats also qualified a robust slate of judicial candidates across multiple circuits:

Circuit Court

- 10th Circuit: Shanta Craig Owens (Pl. 2), Kechia Davis (Pl. 3), Ruby Clark (Pl. 10)
- 15th Circuit: Brooke Reid (Pl. 2), J.R. Gaines (Pl. 4), Lloria Munnerlyn James (Pl. 7)
- 26th Circuit: David Johnson (Pl. 2)

District Court

- Greene County: Tonjula Carey, Robert J. Lee, Sr.
- Jefferson County: Martha Reeves Cook (Pl. 1), Maria Fortune (Pl. 2), Jimmy Ray Earley, Jr. (Pl. 7), Hope Marshall (Pl. 7)
- Macon County: Linda Braye Bulls (Pl. 1)
- Madison County: Raven Beach (Pl. 5)
- Montgomery County: Samaria Munnerlyn Dunson (Pl. 1)

State Board of Education

- District 8: Shatika Armstrong

A Broader Strategy for 2026

Democratic officials say the party's expanded slate reflects a deliberate effort to contest more districts, rebuild local infrastructure, and give voters meaningful choices up and down the ballot. With competitive primaries in several legislative districts and a crowded gubernatorial field, the party enters 2026 with renewed energy and a deeper bench than in recent cycles.

Democrats have not won a race for a constitutional office in Alabama government since 2006 when former Governor Jim Folsom Jr. won the Lieutenant Governor's seat for the second time and Ron Sparks was re-elected as Alabama Commissioner of Agriculture and Industries. Democrats are hopeful that this year's congressional midterms change their fortunes in Alabama and beyond.

Qualifying is not over. Qualifying for both major parties continues through January 23 at 5:00 p.m. so this field likely will continue to grow in the next week.

To comment or to ask a question email: brandomreporter@gmail.com



INSIDE THE STATEHOUSE With Steve Flowers

Steve Flowers is Alabama's leading political columnist. His weekly column appears in over 60 Alabama newspapers. Steve served 16 years in the state legislature. He may be reached at: <https://steveflowers.us/>

Kay Ivey is a Legacy Governor



Recently, I had several of Governor Kay Ivey's closest friends and confidantes invite me to visit with them. Over lunch, they posed the question to me, "Do you think Governor Ivey has become a legacy governor?" My response was that she has been an outstanding governor, but I need to give some thought to the meaning of a "legacy" governor.

My perception over the years was that a legacy governor left an indelible, particular generational project that could be linked to their name for posterity. My memory of governors only goes back 60 years and there are only three or four who have left that specific mark.

Our larger-than-life political giant of a governor, James E. "Big Jim" Folsom, paved all the rural roads in the state, so that the small farmers who lived on dirt roads could get their produce they cultivated all year to the market. His creation of the Farm to Market Road Program gives him a legacy.

Big Jim's son, Jim Folsom Jr., was governor for only three years, but he created a legacy as the Father of the Automotive Factory Boom in our state. His landing the Mercedes Plant for Alabama was the impetus for making us the second largest automobile manufacturing state in America. It is now one of the largest economic engines in our state.

Governor George Wallace has numerous legacies. He is the most profound political figure in Alabama history. He was elected governor four times and his wife, Lurleen, another. That record will never be matched. During those terms, he created a legacy in economic development and roads. Probably his greatest accomplishment was the creation of the Alabama Community College System, which has become the mainstay for job creation and workforce development in the last decade for our state.

Governor Fob James could be called a legacy governor. He was elected governor two times, and not consecutively. He has the unique distinction of being elected governor in 1978 as a Democrat and again in 1990 as a Republican. Fob has a legacy as governor of having the businessman's insight to create a trust fund for the General Fund Budget. During his first term an abundance of oil reserves were discovered off Alabama's Gulf Coast. The state sold the oil rights to these reserves for a good amount of money. Fob convinced the legislature to save and preserve the corpus of the oil money in a "rainy day" fund entitled the Heritage Trust Fund. It has been a salvation for the beleaguered General Fund for years.



Governor Kay Ivey

After several weeks of contemplating the question of whether Kay Ivey is a legacy governor, my response is a resounding and enthusiastic yes. Kay Ivey, in my estimation, is the best governor I have seen in my years of following and writing about Alabama political history.

First, Governor Kay Ivey will have been governor for a decade when she leaves office in January 2027. She will have been governor longer than anyone in state history other than George Wallace. She is also the first female elected governor in her own right. In addition, she is the first female Republican governor in history.

Most legacy governors have created their places in history through roads, as is the case with Wallace and Big Jim. Therefore, Kay Ivey knew that roads were the economic engine that drives the growth of jobs and economic expansion. She took the bull by the horns early in her tenure and did a masterful job of corralling the votes in the legislature and stewarding the passage of a gasoline tax increase to maintain and sustain our state roads, bridges, and waterways in Alabama.

This legislation, entitled "Rebuild Alabama," which passed in 2019, has generated over \$1 billion in revenue, paving the way for 500 new road and bridge projects reaching all 67 counties. This long overdue generational improvement of our state's aging roads, bridge system, and state docks is a legacy in itself.

This infrastructure program has led to another Kay Ivey legacy in economic development. Governor Ivey's administration has spearheaded a record breaking \$55 billion in new capital investment and the creation of over 93,000 jobs during her tenure as governor. Furthermore, Governor Ivey's appointments have been sterling and judicious, especially her judicial appointments.

The most important thing that can be said about Kay Ivey's decade as Governor is that she has been a steady "Captain" of the Ship of State. She has brought stability, honesty and integrity to Alabama government. She is solid as a rock. Maybe she should be referred to as "Captain Ivey," rather than "Meemaw."

Kay Ivey is a legacy governor



Ronald A.
Holtsford

Is it good to think about any Legal Issues for the New Year?



Without specifics about yourself I'll make this answer generic in a personal and in a business sense.

I presume you looked at your financial estate planning (401k, mutual funds, stocks and bonds, life insurance, etc) which is important as there

may be some changes such as to an inherited IRA. As of a couple of years ago an unused portion of a 529 may be transferred to a beneficiary's Roth IRA and continues to provide an Alabama tax credit provided certain requirements are met. Ask your investment professional.

You should also think about your legal estate planning. After all you are a year older; you may have gotten married, had a new child, had a child reach the age of majority (19 years), gotten divorced or suffered the death of a spouse or even a child. You may have a child graduate, enter the workforce and be off your payroll. Even if the child is off your payroll you may keep them on your health insurance until they reach age twenty-six (26) as a buffer or necessity if you still have a family plan but it may be that you decide not to continue to carry the young adult child if the plan has changed and the cost can drop significantly. Your financial estate planning goes hand in hand with your legal estate planning and you should discuss that with your lawyer, not that he or she will try to advise you on whether your investment advisor is steering you correctly but rather the impact of your financial worth on your legal estate.



For 2026 the gift tax exemption stays at \$19,000.00 a person, as a gift (child, grandchild, etc.) not requiring the filing of a Gift Tax return or up to \$38,000 to a person if both you and your spouse gift to the same person once per year. There is a unified lifetime basic exclusion and generation skipping tax (GST) limit of \$15.0 million in 2026 per individual. There may be a tax advantage for the wealthy in that and if this seems to be something that might be helpful to your financial planning you should seek the advice of an accountant or other tax/financial professional (may include a tax attorney). In 2025, there was a \$13.99 million total unified estate tax exemption per individual; 2026 will provide a \$15.0 million unified tax exemption as stated above. The total GST and total estate tax exemption are unified in total in that they cannot exceed \$15.0 million. The portable portion mentioned above may be available to a surviving spouse who may be able to combine through election their unused estate credit amounts up to a total of \$30.0 million. See your tax professional after the death of the first spouse if your assets are in the millions. Remember that life insurance is considered for estate tax purposes if you have control over the policy (i.e. ability to change the beneficiaries, cancel the policy, etc). Some individuals have large insurance policies and in the past not inconceivable for high middle class people to have an estate over prior limits but the possibility could even exist with some wealthier individuals. If you die in 2026 with an estate of greater than \$15.0 million (or \$30.0 million for a second to die spouse if entirely portable) then that amount over \$15.0 million will be taxed at 40%.

I had understood a year ago before President Trump's inauguration that the 2026 unified lifetime exclusion was to roll back to around \$7 million so I was pleased that my prediction of possibly no change was in line and even better that the upper limit moved up.

With that said you need to pull out your **Last Will and Testament** and review it. If you have had any life changes (marriage, divorce, death, large inheritance, new child, etc.) a new Will may be in order. If you don't have a Last Will and Testament you need to have a lawyer prepare one as soon as possible. **Why do you need one? Because if you don't then the State of Alabama has one for you.** Some of the spousal examples under the rules of intestacy (dying without a Will); (1) first \$100,000 to spouse and then 1/2 of the remaining estate to the living parent(s) when there are no children, (2) if children then the spouse gets \$50,000 and 1/2 of the rest, (3) if one or more of the children are not yours then the surviving spouse only gets half of everything, period. This is probably not the estate plan you have in mind. There are internet sites and software programs that can also assist with a Last Will and Testament but there is no guarantee that it will pass muster regarding state rules on probate nor a guarantee that it will do what you want upon your death. The best chance of meeting estate goals is through a lawyer and if you are of moderate means, you may be surprised that it is less expensive than you think. In the long run a Will may save money since an intestate estate when probated requires the bonding of the Personal Representative and an inventory of the decedent's estate. I run into too many old or non-attorney prepared defective Wills when it really counts and there is an attempt to probate the estate. Obviously such probate is not without issue. If you have an out of state prepared Will it should be acceptable for probate since under the Full Faith and Credit Clause (Section 1, Article 4) of the United States Constitution a valid Will prepared in one state is valid in Alabama. There can be issues so a review with an Alabama attorney is always a good thing to do. If you have a Will and you prepared it yourself or got something off of the internet I would highly suggest you see an Alabama licensed attorney and talk about your current document and estate plan. I have seen some really bad Wills that people put together that ended up costing more time and money than necessary because of flaws in the document. It is much better to pay a few hundred dollars plus rather than having flawed estate planning documents that cannot meet your goals, cost several hundred dollars more to correct flaws or delay the administration of your estate. Even if your estate is small (currently under \$47,000 combining allowances but with no real property inclusion), there is a small estate procedure wherein the Probate Judge may order distribution 30 days after a one time newspaper notice and a Medicaid notice requirement have been met. This modified method from existing small estate law became effective last year on October 1, 2025.

Aside from the Last Will and Testament you may want to have a **Power of Attorney** prepared, both one for financial reasons and health. Most prepared these days are durable which require wording that the power of attorney is effective even in your disability or incapacity. Financial Powers of Attorney became a statutory form as of 1 January 2012. It is not necessary that it appear exactly as the statutory form but the law says "is substantially like" the statutory form. Most attorneys have concerns about the filling in the blank and initialing choices format and most now include tried and true language used in their practices for their many years. A financial Power of Attorney is now by default a Durable power; however I insert the needed language anyway to make sure that there are no questions about its durability. A Power of Attorney (POA) can be very powerful and placed in the wrong hands can be damaging such as a daughter that is named AGENT and decides to sell your lake house and push you towards moving to an assisted living facility. On the other hand, naming a trusted AGENT and retaining the POA for future needs can be extremely beneficial. The POA can be used so that someone can write your bills for you during incapacity, file your taxes and with health/ Health Insurance Portability and Privacy Act (HIPAA) provisions monitor your care with the doctors and hospital as well as handle medical insurance billing. The POA may also be used to nominate whom you would want as a conservator or guardian should one need to be named for you through a Court proceeding. A health care power of attorney can be used to coincide with the Advance Directive mentioned below should you have need to name another

or others to help with health care decisions.

The final personal document would be an **Advance Directive for Health Care**, which is composed of a **Living Will and Health Care Proxy nomination**. It will allow you to make certain decisions about end of life issues should you later become unable to speak for yourself and two doctors have determined that you will likely die in the near future. This is the document that Terri Schiavo DID NOT have and for that reason the court found the testimony of the "husband" who was then living with another woman to be credible as to Terri's final wishes. Hmmmm. Naming a Health Care Proxy is the same as naming a health care power-of-attorney such as under a POA. The proxy is given limited rights under which situations that they can make decisions. And by the way, the ex-spouse automatically loses that job as proxy upon divorce. That's dodging a bullet!

If retirement is nearing and you will also receive Social Security consider that the 2026 Medicare Part B will move from the 2025, \$185.00 to \$202.90 per month dependent on whether the senior is subject to the statutory "hold harmless" provision. With higher income brackets so does the cost for Part B increase. If you need nursing home (skilled nursing) care under Part A, days 1-20 are fully covered provided you continue to meet Medicare's requirements for those days; the co-payment for days 21-100 (if you qualify) will be \$217.00 per day (was \$209.50 per day in 2025). After day 100 you are 100% on your own unless you have some other means of long term care payment. If you have not already checked on long term health care insurance you should do so now. It not only will cover nursing home care but can also cover assisted living or in home care. If you consider this insurance also look carefully at the options since they may be equally as important as the policy itself. This includes inflation increases which are very important or even the option of continued coverage for a certain amount of time when one with "forgetfulness" forgets to pay the premium.

With the exception of a few states and the District of Columbia, the individual mandate under the **Affordable Care Act (Obamacare)** was changed in 2019 to zero. That of course continues to be contentious in that without the mandate it is argued that the ACA is null. Four states and the District of Columbia have state mandate penalties though Vermont has no penalty attached to their mandate. The time to make health care changes under the ACA open enrollment ended January 15, 2026 and unless you have a qualifying event or become eligible under Medicaid/ CHIP after the open enrollment period passes this will be the last opportunity until the late 2026 period which probably begins in November. Older Americans may be eligible both for Medicare and Medicaid with impoverished Americans being Medicaid eligible when they cannot afford premiums under Obamacare and some Americans are eligible for insurance from the market place with subsidized premiums.

If you are currently in business or considering a business what about entity? A **sole proprietorship** offers pass through taxation but no limited liability. Your personal and business assets are at risk in a lawsuit. A **Limited Liability Company (LLC)** or a **Registered Limited Liability Partnership (RLLP or LLP)** offers the same pass through tax advantages as well as limited liability. A **"C" corporation** offers the same limited liability but there is taxation on the corporation and taxation on the shareholders. If you are in one of these entities and paying yourself a reasonable salary for the position or industry talk to your accountant about the possibility of an **"S" corporation** election. An \$80,000.00 salary has been an approximate historical salary but again it must be reasonably related to your job and that you are not underpaying yourself. Current tax considerations suggest that pass through entities not involved as professional service businesses (accountants, attorneys, etc) such as sole proprietorships, LLC's, LLP's and S corporations may take an additional significant percentage off their income. Because pass through entities are taxed at the owner's tax rate this will give an additional percentage decrease in taxable income. In addition to the advantages of pass through taxation and limited liability there may also be some self-employment tax advantages since some of the income can be paid to a shareholder- employee as a profit distribution. The Internal Revenue Service however looks for Shareholder-Employees that pay themselves substandard salaries for their position in order that they can take more from the company as a distribution and save more on Self Employment taxes. The IRS will consider a reasonable income based on IRS summarized factors considered by a Court case from the Eighth Circuit, which advised shareholders to give them careful consideration in establishing their compensation.

The factors are:

- (1) Employee qualifications;
- (2) The nature, extent, and scope of the employee's work;
- (3) The size and complexity of the business;
- (4) Prevailing general economic conditions;
- (5) The employee's compensation as a percentage of gross and net income;
- (6) The employee-shareholder's compensation compared with distributions to shareholders;
- (7) The employee-shareholder's compensation compared with that to non-shareholder employees or paid in prior years;
- (8) Prevailing rates of compensation for comparable positions in comparable concerns; and
- (9) Comparison of compensation paid to a particular shareholder-employee in previous years where the corporation has a limited number of officers.

An **"S" Corporation** election only exists through the IRS and has specific requirements. So you can be an existing LLC, C Corporation, etc. but elect via the IRS as an "S" Corporation. Ask your accountant about whether it is right for your business.

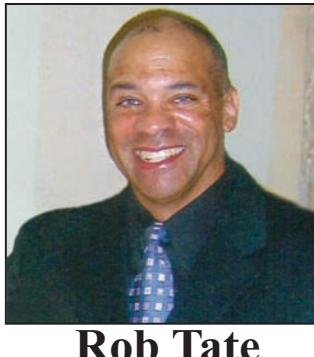
Additionally, the Corporate Transparency Act is in effect. There are twenty-three exceptions to inclusion in the Corporate Transparency Act. It seems that the exclusions relate to businesses that are already for one reason or another highly regulated. Many of the exclusions deal with companies that deal with money in the sense of banking, investment and insurance. As well there is a large corporate exclusion. The law is focused on uncovering money laundering and illicit finance. Foreign companies are more prone to investigation and penalty enforcement than domestic companies. At time of writing I would suggest anyone that has a beneficial interest in a business as an owner look into this sooner than later as to whether you need to file this or not, which can be done electronically.

I hope that this has helped with your question. If you need a lawyer you can contact the Alabama State Bar Lawyer Referral service or ask a trusted friend about a lawyer that they might recommend.

This article is informative only and not meant to be all inclusive. Additionally this article does not serve as legal advice to the reader and does not constitute an attorney-client relationship. The reader should seek counsel from their attorney should any questions exist.

"No representation is made that the quality of legal services performed is greater than the quality of legal services performed by other lawyers."

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Rob Tate

WHAT TOLERANCE

A full 19 years ago, I wrote this piece on tolerance. You will see how I describe my reactions to ever-increasing Muslim intolerance inside the United States. Although some will cry out the alarmist and utterly stupid condemnation of "Islamophobia," reality and actual observations

have nothing to do with "an irrational fear of Islam." It has to do with what my two green eyes clearly see. Since this was first written in 2007, just six years after 9/11, we in the West have seen a lot. From 2015's regrettable summer of mass migration to the unfolding accounts of Somali criminality in Minnesota, we are seeing a lot.

Speaking of the Somali criminality, have you guys been keeping up with it? It appears that many Somalis took advantage of the COVID pandemic, lied about companies they were running and bilked tax payers out of at least \$250 million and up to \$1 billion. It is incredible. I heard one man say, **"Do you know why third-world countries are the way they are? It is because third-world people are the way they are. Countries are a reflection of the people who live there."** "Rob, that's racist!" First of all, no it is not. Secondly, it is still true. Governor Tim Walz predictably blamed President Trump for calling out these crimes and put blame on this fiasco in the current White House. Walz of course, is not responsible for any of it. And predictably, the Somali princess Ilhan Omar blames the American system for the crimes of her people. But isn't interesting that when she came to Congress, her net worth was reported to be around \$65,000 and remained stable for a couple of years. Then within a two-year period, her net worth has reportedly skyrocketed to \$30 million. More on this another time.

What is obvious to those who want to see it, many of the invaders of the West are clearly not hiding what their true intentions are. More and more Islamic leaders are coming out of the closet, so to speak, and announcing their true intentions which includes the take over of the West, mandatory conversion to Islam (this falls under the chapter of "Ain't Never, Never Gonna Happen" – yes, I know that is a triple-negative), the paying of a poll tax, Jizya, on non-believers and/or death. They are not even hiding it anymore. Western Europe is in the beginnings of war for cultural survival and the snap back against the ignorant leaders who allowed for the mass migration in the first place is evident. Just yesterday, 12 Jews were killed by a Muslim at a Hannukah celebration in Australia. To be fair, it was another Muslim man who took the initiative and took down one of the shooters while as some reports state, several police officers stood by and did nothing.

Cultures are at risk because the invaders that were allowed in are reproducing at rates that locals cannot or will not match. It is a matter of time. YouTube can be an interesting rabbit hole to climb down – if you want. There is nothing I have said that cannot be verified. The crimes, the violence and particularly distressing to me is the sheer number of rapes of local western women by the invaders. I read where one estimate claims over 100 rapes of French women every day. Yes, that is per day and no it is not people named Jean-Claude doing the rapes. The violence and criminality is repeated daily in England, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Switzerland, Norway, Italy and other countries. But not in Poland. Why? Because from the first day, despite the bellowing cries of the liberal fascist leaders in other countries, Poland did not allow the invaders to enter their country.

"Rob, why do you say invaders? That is just rude." Hmmm. I have written on this a couple of times but did you not see the photographs from 2015? Look at refugee photos from any war and you will see mostly old women, old men and children. From 2015? Mostly young men. True refugees? More like an invading army. Western Europe will be paying the price forever. But let's take a look at what I wrote 19 years ago and see how much has or has not changed. To be honest, a lot has changed. But only for the worst.

What Is Tolerance ??

Tolerance:

a: Sympathy or indulgence for beliefs or practices differing from or conflicting with one's own.

b: the act of allowing something : TOLERATION

I am not quite sure where to start with this column. I know what I want to say but feel compelled to restrain myself and my words. At the same time, however, I feel that I have to address the following issue as clearly as I possibly can. So here goes.

It appears that Muslim taxi cab drivers in Minneapolis, MN have been refusing to allow certain people to ride in their taxis. According to reports, about 100 people are refused service every month. What people, you ask? Well, anybody who is carrying alcohol of any kind or those with dogs. Why, you ask? Because these drivers feel that since alcohol is forbidden according to Islamic law and that dogs are considered "dirty" animals, they have the right to refuse service to these

When Criminal Regimes Finally Face Consequences



Let's get something straight right up front. What just happened in Venezuela was not recklessness. It was long delayed accountability. This operation was carried out by brave men and women of the United States military, many of whom will never be named and will never be publicly recognized. They executed their mission with discipline, precision, and professionalism, placing duty above recognition and country above self and deserve our eternal gratitude.

For years, the so-called international community hid behind press releases, summits, and empty condemnations while Venezuela collapsed into a narco state. A country with the largest proven oil reserves on Earth was turned into a cartel run prison camp by Nicolás Maduro and his inner circle. Millions fled the country, children went hungry, and criminal networks flourished, while Washington and its allies largely confined themselves to talk. President Donald Trump chose a different course. He acted.

What Trump instigated in Venezuela's Capital Caracas was not chaos. He instigated consequences for a regime that had ceased to function as a government and instead operated as a criminal enterprise. Drug trafficking, money laundering, terrorist facilitation, and state sponsored extortion were not side effects of mismanagement. They were the business model. Maduro did not merely govern badly. He ran Venezuela like a cartel boss with a flag, sustained by the belief that no one would ever meaningfully challenge him. That assumption no longer holds.

The predictable response from the American left arrived almost immediately. Democratic leaders and their media allies rushed to condemn the action as destabilizing, reckless, and dangerous, recycling the same language they deploy whenever American strength is exercised with

clarity. This reaction has little to do with Venezuela and everything to do with reflexive opposition to Trump winning again.

These are the same voices that tolerated Maduro's dismantling of democratic institutions, excused mass migration as unavoidable, and treated regional destabilization as an acceptable cost of restraint. They offer no serious alternative beyond sanctions that never bite, diplomacy without leverage, and moral lectures delivered to regimes that openly mock them. That approach failed Venezuela, failed the region, and failed American interests. Trump rejected that failed model, and in doing so reaffirmed a principle that has guided American policy for more than two centuries, The Monroe Doctrine.

The Monroe Doctrine has never been about conquest or empire. It has always been about clarity. The Western Hemisphere is not a staging ground for hostile foreign powers or criminal regimes aligned against the United States. Under Maduro, Venezuela became exactly that.

Russia established military and intelligence ties in Caracas to project power into the Americas. China bound Venezuela into economic dependency through debt, oil, and infrastructure leverage. Iran built sanctions evasion networks and operational footholds throughout the region. Hezbollah exploited Venezuelan territory for money laundering, narcotics trafficking, and document fraud that extended across Latin America and into the United States.

This was not abstract geopolitics. It was operational presence by hostile actors embedded in the hemisphere under the protection of a rogue regime. Under the Monroe Doctrine, the United States is not required to tolerate that reality. Action in this context is not escalation, its enforcement.

What President Trump authorized in Venezuela reflected that understanding. It was a precise, deliberate operation aimed at the regime and its criminal infrastructure, not at the Venezuelan people. In that respect, it stands as the most disciplined use of American force since Trump

Robservations...

The views of submitted editorials may not be the express views of The Alabama Gazette.

people. Now I'm not talking about drunks carrying knives and dozens of open containers of beer, but I'm talking about a person perhaps carrying a bottle of wine to a friend's house as a gift for dinner. Nor am I talking about a person with fifteen dogs but blind people who have Seeing Eye dogs or other working dogs performing services to their owners. By the way, drugs are against Islamic law too, but how come the Taliban continue to be the world's number one exporter of opium?

Now, am I the only red-blooded American out here that is pissed off about this? There are so many issues at stake here, my head begins to swim thinking about them. On the radio, one taxi driver from Somalia said that alcohol is against his religion so he should not have to carry someone carrying alcohol. Well first of all, SHUT UP. This is not Somalia or have you forgotten this is America and the reason you are here is because Somalia, let me be nice, is not a real nice place to live. Hmmmm. What a thought. Next, because of your religion, you expect us, in America, to sanction and legalize overt discrimination, something contrary to our values. I am sorry my friend, but that is not what America is about. As a taxi driver, you are required to perform a service to your community. IT IS YOUR JOB. If you don't like the idea of transporting these people, get another job or hop on a boat and get the hell out of this country. It is that simple. Sit down, shut up and do your job.

Another issue at stake is where does this end? If a Muslim taxi driver sees a Jewish man on the street, is he going to refuse him service? What about an uncovered woman? What would happen if a Christian driver refused service to a Muslim or homosexual? Would that be considered fair to these pinheads? Of course not, and rightfully so. Discrimination has no place against any one group. I don't know what to think about the spineless wimps in this country that will continue to allow this kind of behavior and will continue to challenge to our way of life.

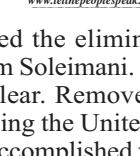
For those of you that think these are just isolated incidents, think again. I believe this is just symptomatic of an ever-aggressive Muslim effort to see exactly what they can get away with. More reports about that this same unacceptable behavior have been described in Australia, Denmark and Norway with one woman in Oslo reporting that 20 taxis passed her up because she had a dog with her. In Switzerland, a Muslim doctor originally from Palestine, refused service to an American woman because he didn't agree with US foreign policy. In Norway, a pro-Israel politician has received death threats from the ever-growing Muslim population and if you recall, just before the fall of the Taliban, non-Muslims were going to have to wear yellow pieces of cloth on their clothing in order to readily identify them in public (sound familiar?).

It is quickly becoming "crunch time" in the West, people. It is more and more evident that many of these immigrants infiltrating Western societies are not the least bit interested in assimilating into their new environments and are in fact becoming ever aggressive in attempting to get their new adopted societies to change our ways of life in order to accommodate them. Again, all I am saying is to see them using their own words and actions to verify what I am writing. I think it is time for Westerners to stand up firmly and not just say "no" but "hell no." Although "You are here, either assimilate or get out," might sound good to some, it will never happen. Why? It is NOT part of their strategic objective. It never has been and never will be. Deal with it.

I find it funny how we are continually bombarded with the words of their alleged "tolerance" of others yet it is western society that openly welcomes them and allows them to practice their religion (rightfully so). But it is them, in every corner of the world, which continues to deny equal rights to all its citizens and deny basic religious freedoms we hold so dear. Sadly, once they come to our shores, one of the first things they want to do is urinate on our constitution and begin denying our own citizens the rights they wish they had in the countries they immigrated from. Sickening.

Grow up, America. We all have rights guaranteed in our constitution. Why in the hell did we fight World War II and defeat Nazism and Fascism just to let immigrants come to our shores and "give" them the right to discriminate against US citizens. If we allow this behavior to continue, it will get worse. It always does. Just look to England today. A couple of days ago, I woke up to an incredibly high-pitched squeal. It was so loud that it hurt my ears. I did a little bit of research and found that it was both Winston Churchill and Sir Arthur "Bomber" Harris spinning in their graves at several million rpms.

If we are not willing to stand up now, once Pandora's box is open, good luck getting it closed again. Their brazen intolerance will strengthen with every sign of weakness displayed by us. You don't pick up a rider, you are fired. If you are not yet a citizen, you are deported. Questions? If you are a doctor and refuse treatment because of political views, see ya. Bye, bye. Call me from wherever you came from. Questions? There was a time when Americans wouldn't take foolishness from anybody, where have they gone?



Perry O. Hooper Jr.

Founder Let the People Speak
Former Alabama State Representative
Alabama State Republican Executive Committee



ordered the elimination of Iranian terrorist commander Qasem Soleimani. In both cases, the objective was limited and clear. Remove a central node of instability without dragging the United States into a prolonged conflict. This was accomplished without the loss of single American and was completed in a manner of hours not days much less the endless conflicts that prior administrations started.

This is not the language of endless wars or nation building. It is the language of deterrence. You do not prevent chaos by tolerating lawlessness. You prevent it by making clear that criminal regimes and their foreign patrons will face consequences. The message sent could not be more direct. Governments that turn themselves into criminal enterprises, align with hostile powers, and export drugs, violence, and instability cannot hide behind diplomatic formalities indefinitely.

It is also worth noting what critics continue to ignore. Trump did not target the Venezuelan people. He targeted the regime that had been crushing them. Precision matters in matters of force, and so does moral clarity.

This is what America First looks like in practice. Not endless deployments. Not fantasy driven interventions. Decisive action against real threats, followed by the opportunity for nations to reclaim their sovereignty without tyrants sitting on their necks.

Trump did not destabilize Venezuela. He removed the dead weight that had been dragging it down. History will not remember this moment as aggression. It will remember it as the moment the illusion of impunity finally collapsed.

Together, these actions mark a return to consequence based foreign policy grounded in deterrence, clarity, and American resolve. For too long, rogue regimes learned they could exploit weakness, hide behind process, and simply wait out Western will. That era is ending. What happened in Caracas is not an anomaly. It is a signal that leadership has returned, and the world is adjusting accordingly.



John Martin

America's Most Dangerous Criminals

How would we define our most dangerous criminals? Obviously they would be the ones who do the most destruction—like murder, terrorism, arson, kidnapping, child molestation, piracy, etc. For such actions, we have strong laws and heavy penalties for people who commit them.

Of these, who would be the most dangerous? Picking through the list and others not listed, the “most” might not be obvious. But we can use one definition to sort them out.

Believe it or not, we have loopholes where certain types of theft and extortion are technically legal. A **good example is a majority group of legislators who vote for a tax increase without the people's consent.** Similar thefts have happened numerous times over the past decades across the nation—federal, state, and local. Most of the time, especially with various taxes and punitive mandates and regulations, the people had no choice but to suck it up. **Their only recourse was to vote out the culprits**, an action that takes up to four years. The people can't prosecute them and throw them into jail. And only on the rarest of occasions, do the criminal acts ever get reversed.

When we sum up the costs of these crimes (and yes, they were, and still are, real crimes) the total is massive—taxes, bureaucracy, regulations, mandates, lost wages, lost revenue, needless trauma, and unemployment. Since the year 1933 (remember FDR—gold heist, huge windfall, reckless spending, massive unconstitutional mandates, Pearl Harbor setup, and huge tax increases to finance WWII), our nation suffered at least billions, if not trillions of today's dollars in thefts from the people.

However, there is another type of “legal” criminal that makes the above seem like nickel and dime petit larcenists—**PREDATORY TORT LAWYERS**. They structure their careers by seeking out greedy “clients” (often by chasing ambulances) who have suffered usually minor or even fabricated injuries and offer them free consultations if they can represent them in court. When a lawyer “wins,” he gets about a third of the claim, which is often many thousands of dollars. After a few years and multiple cases, a tort lawyer often becomes a millionaire. It is one of the most lucrative rackets one can imagine.

In the U. S. alone, tens of thousands of lawsuits are filed every day. “Litigation is such an accepted part of the culture that a lawsuit is often the first thing people think of when they have a dispute.”

We can find these pirates everywhere—billboards, TV commercials, and huge phone book and newspaper ads. Considering that the ads alone cost fortunes, there can be no doubt that the loot collected must be almost beyond comprehension. A single theft of this magnitude would normally lead to at least several years in prison plus serious restitution. But instead, our current laws have literally given these thugs **CARTE BLANCHE** to commit their devastations again and again, HUNDREDS OF TIMES, with NO penalties or retribution. These are the ultimate repeat offenders. Over the last several decades, losses have probably added up to TRILLIONS of current dollars. We don't really know. Although they boast about their huge settlements, they carefully cover up the massive losses suffered by the hapless defendants.

How did we end up in this litigation quagmire? Look at our Congress, Senate, state legislatures, county commissions, and city councils. Huge majorities in nearly all of them are lawyers. They are the ones who make our laws. They have structured them to give themselves special privileges that allow them to plunder the American people.

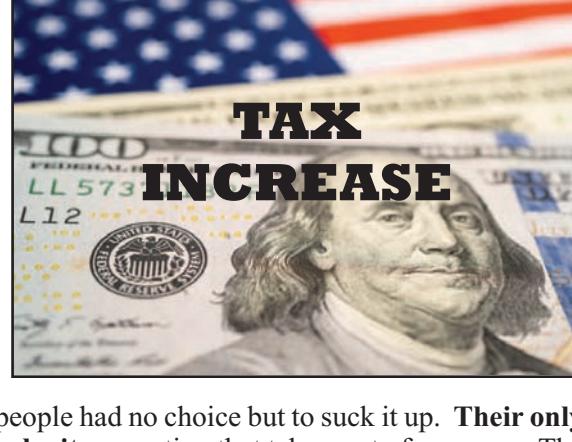
Some states have limits on how much a plaintiff can receive in a lawsuit. In one of these, a defendant at least sometimes has a fair chance of escaping a catastrophic judgement. Unfortunately, Alabama does not even have this little safeguard. A defendant from a minor incident can have his life destroyed.

When we add them all up, how much misery have these shysters collectively wrought? How many people have lost most of their property? How many homesteads have been devastated? How many families have been broken up? How many people have become so destitute, that they actually committed suicide? Although not legally defined as such, abusive lawsuits can be **LEGALIZED MASS MURDER**.

If you ever wonder why liability insurance is so crazy expensive, that's it. It's not the insurance companies that rake in the big bucks; it's the **TORT LAWYERS**. In fact, the insurance companies take considerable risks, and can sometimes become bankrupt from a single outrageous or even fraudulent claim.

Why are tort lawyers so dangerous? ANYBODY can become a victim. Anybody can be charged with a minor incident any time and anywhere. A greedy ambulance chaser can rule an insane amount of expenses for whatever exaggerated or even imagined injuries “suffered” by his client. A crooked judge can back it up with a “deal” with the lawyer. The right to a jury trial is sometimes denied, and even with one, a jury can be prodded or deceived into granting an unreasonable claim. An innocent defendant can lose everything he has and become destitute.

Many wealthy Americans have been obligated to invest in expensive offshore trusts to protect their property (Nevis, Cook Islands, etc.). Setting one up costs \$20,000 up to \$50,000, and annual maintenance fees cost \$5,000 to \$10,000 or more. Middle and lower income people cannot afford them.



The US Chamber of Commerce Institute for Legal Reform stated:

“Plaintiffs' lawyers also employ various tactics in the courtroom designed to manipulate juror behavior and inflate damages. One such tactic is the “reptile theory,” which aims to instill a sense of danger in jurors' minds, diverting their attention from the actual evidence. This approach makes jurors feel like they need to “send a message” to protect their community, leading to inflated verdicts. Another tactic is jury anchoring, where lawyers suggest a specific, exorbitant amount for damages or apply a method for calculating damages that leads to a nuclear verdict. These tactics, combined with persistent lawsuit advertising, mislead the public into believing that multi-million-dollar verdicts are normal, contributing to the increasing frequency and amount of nuclear verdicts.”

According to Sollertis:

“It wasn't always like this. Believe it or not, at one point in history, lawsuits were discouraged and only considered as a last resort. Being an attorney was considered a gentleman's profession. Attorneys were expected to counsel wisdom and restraint, rather than encouraging no-holds-barred litigation. Clearly, that is no longer the case.”

Over the years, numerous lawyers have lost their ethics and gravitated into the massive legal loophole that has allowed them to plunder innocent people without any limits whatsoever.

Again from Sollertis:

“Several facets of our legal system have contributed to this unfortunate situation.”

Attorney advertising

Until relatively recently, attorneys were not allowed to advertise their services. But in 1977, in *Bates v. State Bar of Arizona*, the U.S. Supreme Court held that attorneys had a constitutional right to advertise. It was considered “commercial speech” and therefore protected under the First Amendment.

It's difficult to imagine a world without attorney advertising now. You can't walk down the street without seeing a billboard or a bus stop bench offering to help you with your legal needs. As a consequence of this, lawyers have become both more competitive and more aggressive at chasing that big case.

Contingency fees

A contingency fee is one where the attorney is paid a percentage of a court award (rather than an up front fee or hourly billing). The fee typically ranges anywhere from 25% to over 50%. Contingency fees have become the standard in personal injury cases. With awards in big cases reaching into the millions (and sometimes even billions!), plaintiffs' attorneys stand to make a huge windfall with the right case.

An attorney with this much to gain if they win the case (and nothing if they lose) has a huge incentive to aggressively pursue profitable cases against vulnerable defendants.

No “loser pays” rule

Many other countries follow the English Rule for attorneys' fees, where the losing party pays the other side's legal fees. Under the American Rule, absent a contract or statute to the contrary, each party pays their own legal fees.

What this does, in effect, is provide a system where a plaintiff can bring a lawsuit with no risk to himself. If his attorney takes the case on contingency, and he does not have to pay the other side's legal fees if he loses, he can sue someone without paying anything out of his own pocket. The defendant, on the other hand, risking tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees regardless of the outcome, is very often forced to settle, even if the case has no merit.

Fighting back

Predatory attorneys have encouraged the culture of litigation and Americans have embraced it. It's unlikely that this culture is going to change any time soon. The best way to fight back is to adapt to this environment by being proactive with your wealth.

Predatory attorneys go after easy targets, those with “deep pockets” and vulnerabilities they can exploit. The right asset protection plan puts up walls of legal protection around your assets, changing the landscape altogether. Potential litigants no longer see an open treasure chest ripe for the plucking. Instead, they see an imposing fortress whose defenses they are unlikely to penetrate.

Of all criminals, tort lawyers appear to be the greediest thugs on planet Earth. They employ all kinds of strategies to exploit the legal system and extort all of the money they can grab. Besides abusing innocent people, they also clog up our courts, drive up costs, and create uncertainty. Fairness goes straight out of the window.

Lawsuit abuses also raise the overall costs of goods and services. Businesses are forced to pass on litigation costs to consumers, undermining the economy, and even the fairness and predictability of the legal system itself.

When are we going to protect people from these racketeers? Who is going to bat for the little guys in this lopsided war and defend them? Who is going to put a STOP to these injustices?

WE MUST ENACT AND ENFORCE STRICT LAWS NATIONWIDE TO PROTECT EVERYBODY FROM ABUSIVE LAWSUITS.

SOURCES

1. US Chamber of Commerce Institute for Legal Reform, What is Lawsuit Abuse? <https://instituteforlegalreform.com/blog/what-is-lawsuit-abuse/>

2. Sollertis, Predatory Litigation: A threat against your wealth. <https://sollertis.com/asset-protection/predatory-litigation-a-threat-against-your-wealth/>

The views of submitted editorials may not be the express views of The Alabama Gazette.



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HISTORY BITS AND PIECES

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY



Justice Will Sellers

This public humiliation could have marked the end of the company and curtailed the entrepreneurial spirit of Mr. Heinz, but in many ways, the bankruptcy became a catalyst to work even harder to re-build and prove a point by achieving commercial success.

The Heinz Brand is known around the world today, but in 1875, it was much more localized. Henry Heinz was the son of German immigrant parents who settled in Pennsylvania, and as most people did in those days, the family had a small garden to supply fresh vegetables for their dinner table. Young Henry sold excess produce and enjoyed the extra jingle from the money he made.

Catching the entrepreneurial spirit, Heinz began growing more vegetables exclusively for sale, and because he did so well, his parents purchased a small plot of less than an acre so he could expand his efforts.

Horseradish was particularly popular in his community, but it was time consuming, difficult to make and the odor of the process could be very powerful. Heinz realized he could use horseradish roots from his garden, make the sauce using his family recipe and then sell the finished product around town.

Others sold homemade sauces too, but distribution was limited to a small area as refrigeration and preservatives had not been discovered to prolong the shelf life of these condiments. Since spoilage was a problem, to prevent this, opaque bottles were used to limit exposure, but also to mask the quality of the product. Brown bottles simply made it hard to gauge the freshness of the sauce.

Heinz decided to use clear glass bottles so people could see how fresh his ingredients were; thus, distinguishing his product from any competitors. The consuming public welcomed and appreciated this innovation and as Heinz predicted, sales increased.

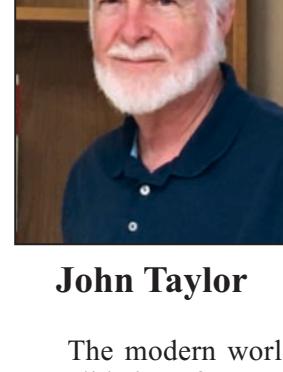
On a small scale, Heinz had an integrated company. He grew the vegetables, built a manufacturing facility to produce his sauces, and had transportation to deliver his products to consumers.

From horseradish, he expanded into other sauces and condiments. Since vinegar was a key ingredient of horseradish, he developed a process to make vinegar, which could also be sold as a standalone product. And, because vinegar was also used to make pickles, any excess could be used to further expand his products to include canning pickles.

Basic ingredients like vinegar and salt were part of making other products, so as one thing led to another, his business expanded to include other sauces, including mustard and something that became closely associated with the company, ketchup, or as they referred to it at the time, catsup.

At age 25, Heinz needed more capital to further expand his company, so he

Conflicting Views of America



John Taylor

"The contest is really for empire on the side of the North, and for independence on that of the South, and in this respect we recognize an exact analogy between the North and the Government of George III, and the South and the Thirteen Revolted Provinces. These opinions may be wrong but they are the general opinions of the English nation."

London Times, November 7, 1861

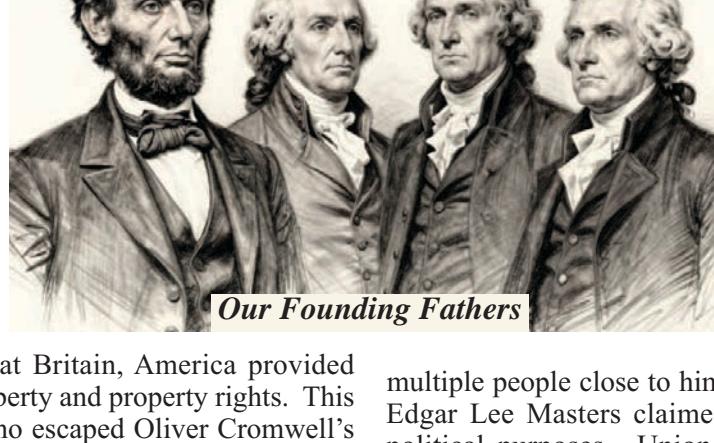
The modern world reflects how Lincoln's consolidation of power has produced the fruits of empire identified in the 1861 *London Times* and predicted by Alexander Stephens, Raphael Semmes, Robert E. Lee, Lord Acton, Jefferson Davis, and others. American interventionism permeates the world in contravention of the warnings of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams.

There is a lack of evidence that America was to be a "proposition nation" or to militarily dominate the world in juxtaposition with the nebulous concept of "American exceptionalism." Absent most of the limitations of Europe and Great Britain, America provided opportunities for the advancement of individual liberty and property rights. This attracted many settlers, e.g., English Cavaliers who escaped Oliver Cromwell's tyrannical regime; Scots-Irish who fled the border country and Northern Ireland to escape economic oppression and violence; Huguenots who escaped religious persecution in France, and other settlers seeking a better life in America.

From the outset there were conflicting notions as to what America should be. The Southern mentality was predominantly "live and let live" and was generally devoid of dictating how others should live. Many Northerners shared this belief; the New England Puritans were the exception. Patrick Henry noted this and Maryland-born Admiral Raphael Semmes echoed Henry's observations. Henry observed the New England "Yankees" whom Southerners had consented to join a compact (constitution) with, while amiable when in the minority, were likely to trample on Southern rights once they attained numerical superiority. In *Memoirs of Service Afloat*, Semmes claimed the goal of the "Puritan Yankee" was to remake the world in his own image. Matters worsened after many lost their religion and morphed into Universalists, Unitarians, and Transcendentalists.

Jefferson Davis stated: *"I love the Union and the Constitution, but I would rather leave the Union with the Constitution than remain in the Union without it."* The Constitution's blueprint for federalism was a bold experiment. Article 1, Section 8 enumerates the powers delegated to the Federal Government with all other powers left to the States or the people. Davis understood Lincoln's goals - expand central authority, diminish States Rights, enrich political allies, and plant the seeds of empire. The Republican Party's corporatist agenda caused many in both North and South to mirror Davis' concerns.

Many believed that Lincoln and the Radical Republicans sought to create an empire that would ultimately surpass the British Empire. For what other reasons than centralization, control, and avarice would Lincoln send armies to invade, destroy, and subjugate the South? Lincoln allegedly referenced a fear of bankers



Our Founding Fathers

- supposedly international bankers, e.g., the Rothschilds - yet bankers routinely finance both sides of wars. Furthermore, Lincoln advocated a national bank, a cornerstone of a planned economy. Lincoln repeatedly said he did not invade the South to destroy slavery. Financial remuneration of slaveholders would have accomplished that and spared the senseless destruction of the Southern States. Slavery could and should have ended peacefully as in most other "civilized" countries.

By crushing States Rights, Lincoln diminished the very mechanism that checked centralized power. Ironically, Lincoln defended self-government in a January 1848 speech to Congress. However, concerning the South, he abandoned this belief and advocated government by force. The fact Lincoln was in the back pocket of industrial and banking interests most assuredly swayed his opinion. In modern times, we have witnessed "industrialists" and their political puppets offshore thousands of American jobs via pseudo-free trade agreements.

The invasion, destruction, and occupation of the Southern States severely damaged the traditional Christian South, leading to schisms within various denominations. According to multiple people close to him, Lincoln lacked true Christian beliefs; however, as Edgar Lee Masters claimed, he used the facade of "Christian morality" for political purposes. Union victory ultimately made everyone subservient to Lincoln's god—centralized governmental power.

Lincoln and the centralizers won and they continue to win. As times get worse and freedoms continue to diminish, Jefferson Davis' prediction will be put to the test: *"Our situation illustrates the American idea that governments rest on the consent of the governed, and that it is the right of the people to alter or abolish them whenever they become destructive of the ends for which they were established."* The present opposing views of America are mostly derived from the "Lincolnian" forced Union under which we live. "Consensual Government" has become passé; however, as Davis said, at some point it *"is bound to reassess itself."*

Sources: "American Exceptionalism" is typically traced back to the Frenchman, Alexis de Tocqueville, who noted the experimental nature of America's federal republic that emphasized individual liberty, religious freedom, and the idealistic view of equality; *Union At All Costs: From Confederation to Consolidation*, by John M. Taylor; *Memoirs of Service Afloat*, by Admiral Raphael Semmes; *"Jefferson Davis Quotes," American Civil War Story*, at: <https://www.americancivilwarstory.com/jefferson-davis-quotes.html>; *"Confederate States of America - Inaugural Address of the President of the Provisional Government - February 18, 1861," The Avalon Project, Lillian Goldman Law Library (Yale Law School)*, at: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/csa_csa1nau.asp; and *Lincoln the Man*, by Edgar Lee Masters (Masters described Lincoln's tactics as Hebraic-Puritanism); Note: Although the London Times states *"These opinions may be wrong"* this opinion was widespread. It was commonly believed in both North and South that these United States are a confederation of States --not a "nation."

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Montgomery County Sheriff's Office

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Mission Statement

The priority of the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office is the welfare and protection of the citizens of Montgomery County. We work hard at putting our citizens and communities first. The Mission of the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office is to provide the best law enforcement protection and service for Montgomery County.

Montgomery Whitewater Announce Swiftwater Rescue Training Program

The Montgomery County Commission and Montgomery Whitewater today announced the launch of Phase 1 of the Swiftwater Rescue (SWR) Training Program, supported by an Innovate Alabama Project Grant that strengthens emergency response preparedness and positions Montgomery as a regional leader in high-risk rescue training.

Montgomery Whitewater is one of the most advanced, purpose-built training environments in the world. Unlike natural rivers, which are unpredictable and often unsafe for structured training, the facility allows agencies to train in predictable, repeatable conditions, adjust water flow and features intentionally, and safely replicate complex rescue scenarios throughout the year, including night operations.

Once operational, the program at Montgomery Whitewater is expected to become one of only six controlled swiftwater rescue training sites in the United States, attracting first responders from across Alabama and beyond.

"This investment reflects the County's continued commitment to public safety, resilience, and long-term planning," said Montgomery County Commission Vice Chairman Carmen Moore-Ziegler. *"With Innovate Alabama's support, we are leveraging a world-class asset to give first responders access to realistic, repeatable training that prepares them for some of the most dangerous situations they will ever face."*



Storm Shelter, New Upgrades Now Open at Flatwood Community Center

The first storm shelter in Montgomery County is officially open after the Montgomery County Commission cut the ribbon for the completion of construction on the storm shelter, as well as the new playground and a covered pavilion at the Flatwood Community Center.



"The Flatwood community deserves facilities that are safe, modern, and built for families, and this project represents the community's continuation of the rebuilding process," said Montgomery District 4 County Commissioner Isaiah Sankey. *"With this project, we have provided a critical lifeline in times of severe weather and have also improved playground facilities for local recreation."*

Totaling nearly \$280,000 for all three additions, these upgrades mark an important investment in safety, wellness, and quality of life for Flatwood residents at Montgomery County at large.

"The Flatwood Community Center has always been a hub for this community, and these additions ensure it will continue to serve families for generations to come," said Montgomery County Commission Chairman Doug Singleton. *"From recreation to safety, this project reflects our commitment to investing in every neighborhood of Montgomery County."*

The state-of-the-art storm shelter is built to sustain wind gusts at 250 miles per hour and has a maximum capacity of 74 occupants. When the shelter is activated in a weather event, it is open for all residents, regardless of zip code, with space available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Funding for the storm shelter came in part from the Governor's Emergency Relief Fund, which is managed by the United Ways of Alabama. The grant covered 25 percent of the storm shelter's total project costs of \$150,000.

The newly installed playground is a major upgrade that provides a safe, modern space for children to stay active. The re-built pavilion features picnic tables and outdoor grills, offering families and community groups a gathering place for events, reunions, and celebrations.

KATIE BRITT

U.S. SENATOR FOR ALABAMA

U.S. Senators Katie Britt,
John Cornyn, Colleagues
Take Action to Protect
Law Enforcement Officers

U.S. Senators Katie Britt (R-Ala.), John Cornyn (R-Texas), and several of their Senate Republican colleagues introduced the **Back the Blue Act**, which would increase penalties for criminals who target law enforcement officers and provide new tools for officers to protect themselves.

"As dangerous, violent threats and rhetoric rise against our courageous law enforcement officers, it is more important than ever that Congress ensures they have the protection and resources they deserve," said Senator Britt. *"The Back the Blue Act honors their commitment to protecting our families, communities and nation, and reaffirms our steadfast support for those who risk their lives every day to keep our nation safe."*

The **Back the Blue Act** would strengthen laws to protect police officers, create a specific aggravating factor for federal death penalty prosecutions, and limit

federal habeas relief for murders of law enforcement officers. Additionally, it would expand the self-defense and Second Amendment rights for law enforcement officers.

"Our law enforcement officers bravely risk their lives daily to protect our communities, and anyone who targets them should be met with the full force of the law, including the death penalty," said Senator Cornyn. *"America was built on the principles of law and order, and this legislation sends a clear message that targeted attacks on law enforcement will not be tolerated, dangerous criminals will be held accountable, and our men and women in blue have our full and unwavering support."*

This legislation is endorsed by the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), National Association of Police Organizations (NAPO), Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association (FLEOA), Major County Sheriffs of America (MCSA), National Narcotic Officers' Associations' Coalition (NNOAC), Association of State Criminal Investigative Agencies (ASCIA), and the Sergeants Benevolent Association NYPD.

Senator Britt has long advocated for increasing federal support for our law enforcement officers. The historic passage of her **Laken Riley Act** included an amendment requiring U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to detain any illegal alien who assaults a law enforcement officer.

Earlier this year, she also joined Senator Ted Cruz (R-Texas) and several of their colleagues in introducing the **CLEAN D.C. Act**, which would reverse steps taken by D.C. City Council that threaten officer safety and weaken law enforcement. In light of recent and increasing attacks, she has called for the dangerous targeting of our law enforcement officers to end and for perpetrators to be held accountable to the fullest extent of the law.

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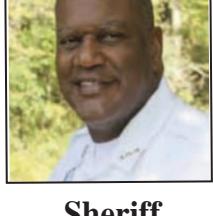
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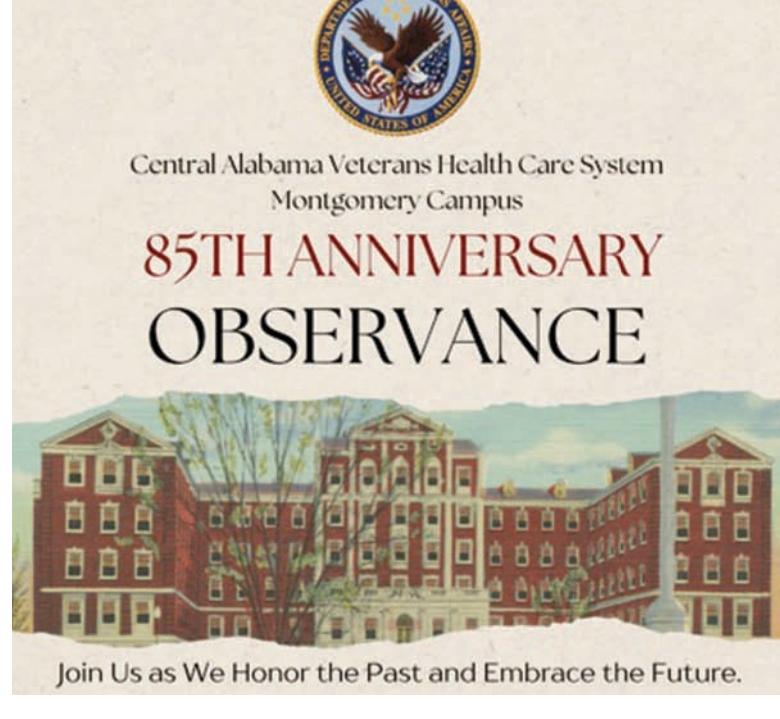
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Honoring Our Heroes



85th Anniversary of Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System



Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System recently commemorated the 85th anniversary of its Montgomery Campus during a Dec. 15, 2025, observance honoring more than eight decades of service to Alabama's Veterans.

The ceremony brought together community leaders, Veterans, and staff at the Montgomery Campus' West Campus to reflect on the facility's enduring legacy, which began when the hospital first opened its doors on Nov. 1, 1940.

"This anniversary is not just about a building; it is about the thousands of lives touched and the promise we keep to our nation's heroes," said CAVHCS Director Amir Farooqi. *"From 1940 to 2025, our mission has remained steadfast, even as our methods and facilities have modernized to meet the changing needs of our Veterans."*

The observance featured a keynote address by Alabama State Rep. Ed Oliver and was emceed by WSFA 12 anchor Simon Schuessler. Attendees also witnessed the presentation of official proclamations by Senior Policy Advisor Eddie Compton on behalf of Mayor Steven L. Reed and Montgomery County Commissioner Justin Castanza, recognizing the hospital's longstanding role in the community.

The Dec. 15 ceremony reflected both respect for the past and pride in the future of CAVHCS. During the observance, centenarian Veterans were recognized alongside trailblazing leaders and long-standing community partners whose support has strengthened Veteran care across generations.

The program underscored the enduring relevance of the CAVHCS mission and reaffirmed a commitment to delivering high-quality, compassionate care. It served as both a moment of reflection and a recommitment to serving Veterans with integrity, respect, and excellence.

Over 85 years, the Montgomery campus has achieved numerous milestones while continuing to modernize and adapt to meet the needs of those it serves. Most recently, CAVHCS earned a Five-Star Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services rating, reflecting a continued focus on quality and safety rooted in a long-standing tradition of care. The event underscored CAVHCS's continued commitment to delivering safe, high-quality health care to Veterans throughout the Central Alabama region, while honoring the legacy that has shaped the organization for 85 years.



Loretta Grant ~ Alabama Gazette
Speaking in Memory of Dr. Martha Simmons



Associate Director for Patient Care Services Laundrena LaPradd-Bradley



Keynote Speaker
State Rep. Ed Oliver



Director Amir Farooqi - Justin Castanza



Director Amir Farooqi - Eddie Compton



Director Amir Farooqi
State Rep. Ed Oliver



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Veterans January Birthdays

Wilson, Buddy Martin	January 3
Wheat, Jerry Glen	January 4
Colt, Geoff Allen	January 6
Ray, William Randall	January 10
Livingston, James E.	January 12
Cerha, Robert C.	January 14
Pack, Lamont Dewitt	January 16
Partridge, George Robert	January 16

Grinstead, William A.	January 21
Palomaria, Alexander	January 21
Meek, Marbara Anne	January 23
Scott, Rosa	January 23
McAndrew, Lanny	January 25
Bonner, Bille Gene	January 28
Rea, Denny	January 28
Rogers, Willie James	January 31

COACH TOMMY TUBERVILLE

U.S. SENATOR  FOR ALABAMA



Tuberville Honors
Susan Shapiro
of New Market
as December
"Veteran of the Month"

The holidays are a great reminder of the joy that comes from giving of our time and talents. It's also a time to reflect on those like Lieutenant Colonel Susan Shapiro of New Market, Alabama, who are willing to spend holidays away from loved ones so that we can celebrate in peace with ours.

Susan grew up in a military family. Her father was a Master Sergeant in the Air Force, and many of her four older siblings either served themselves or are military spouses. Susan decided to join herself in 1989 as a means to pay for her college. However, this decision led to more

than two decades of service. While in basic training in California, Susan met her husband and fellow Army veteran Jeff. They later welcomed their son, Trent.

But before fighting on the battlefield abroad, she had to defeat a battle here at home: breast cancer. And that she did. Just three years after defeating cancer, Susan deployed to the Middle East to serve with the Headquarters Company Command and fight in the war on terror. While she was overseas, she connected deeply with two other women, her "battle buddies" as she calls them, Tammy and Sabine. One of her fondest memories of her time in Iraq is when her team members coordinated a Cancer Walk with her entire Command as her family members back in the states did a Cancer Walk of their own.

Susan also played a key part in Redstone Arsenal's Missile Defense Agency until her retirement in 2013. She now spends most of her time with her friends and family and rescuing animals in need of a home.

As we enter into this holiday season, I am honored to recognize Susan Shapiro as the December 'Veteran of the Month.'

Senator Tommy Tuberville represents Alabama in the United States Senate and is a member of the Senate Armed Services, Agriculture, Veterans' Affairs, HELP and Aging Committees.



Susan Shapiro
of New Market, AL



UPCOMING AREA EVENTS FOR VETERANS



River Region Veterans Coalition Meeting

Monday January 26th, 2026

Feast Buffet

5831 Atlanta Highway, Montgomery, AL 36117

Arrive no later than 5:30 pm for Buffet Meal at \$12.00 per person

Veteran events provided by River Region Veterans Coalition



H. Keith Rudolph
TSGT, US Air Force (Ret.)
President, River Region Veterans Coalition (RRVC)
8174 Ansley Trace
Montgomery, AL 36117
E-mail: keithou2000@gmail.com
Cell phone: (334) 303-4102

Face-to-Face Quarterly Veterans Town Hall

Thursday January 29th, 2026 from 5pm to 6pm

at Montgomery VA West Campus

915 Perry Hill Road, Montgomery, AL 36109

Also available on Facebook Live



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Central Alabama Veterans
Health Care System



YOU ARE NEVER
ALONE...

IT IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT THAT YOU REMEMBER OUR VETERANS DURING THE UPCOMING HOLIDAY SEASON.
MAKE A POINT TO SAY "THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE" WHEN YOU SEE A VETERAN WEARING HIS SERVICE CAP.
HE IS WEARING HIS CAP BECAUSE IS PROUD OF THE OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE HIS COUNTRY.

Always Remember the
Men and Women who have served our great na-
tion and the sacrifices they made.

Veterans Crisis Line
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www.veteranscrisisline.net

GOD BLESS AMERICA!



Thank you for your service!



Dr. Lester Spencer

President Pro Tem

Alabama Emerald Coast Conference
9001 Vaughn Road, Montgomery, Alabama, 36117
Email: Lester@aecgmc.org
Tel: (334) 245-0260 -

Web: www.aecgmc.org

Soul Searching...



GLOBAL
METHODIST CHURCH
ALABAMA EMERALD COAST CONFERENCE

Bless Yourself in 2026 (4 Simple Ways To Refresh Your Life)

Get Outside

I recently read that the average person spends 93% of their life indoors! Wow! That is unbelievable. And sad. That means that if you live to be 100 years old, you will have spent 93 of those years indoors and only 7 years in God's amazing and beautiful creation. God created us to be outside and to enjoy His creation. Our souls need it. Our bodies need it. Our minds need it.

In the **23 Psalm** we witness one of the most important ways God soothes our souls, "*He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside still waters, He restores my soul.*" In other words, *God often soothes our souls in the great outdoors.*

The Psalmist also writes, "*Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound and all that is in it. Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them, let all the trees of the forest sing for joy.*"

-Psalm 96:11-12. See all the references to nature?

In the Gospels, we see that Jesus spent most of his time outdoors and often taught outdoors too. He taught from a boat. He taught on the shores of Galilee. He taught in the fields. He often referred to animals and wildlife as he taught because people could see those sheep, birds, crops, vineyards and trees from where they were sitting.

When he wanted to rest and rejuvenate, he would usually go to a remote place in the wilderness or the desert. After his baptism Jesus headed to the wilderness to be alone, meditate and pray. "*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.*" Luke 4:1.

For me, I have to get outside to detox and feel my soul relax. I guess that's why I have always enjoyed backpacking, camping, hunting, fishing, canoeing, sailing and golf. Being out in God's creation just fills my cup and restores my soul. I feel closer to the Lord in the wild places.

In 2026, I am going to do something good for myself. I am going to get outdoors more often than I did in 2025. I want to encourage you to look for ways to enjoy the outdoors more often in 2026. Soak up some rays at the beach. Go for hike in the mountains. Take a walk in the neighborhood. Read a book on your back porch. Go fishing, hunting, backpacking, golfing, skiing, boating or enjoy some outdoor sport.

Build Margin

Build some margin into your schedule so it is not slammed full. We fill our schedules, because we are worried that we won't get everything done we need to get done in a certain period of time. But Jesus warned us about worry. "*Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*" -Jesus, Matthew 6:34

When you put things on your calendar give yourself some space in between activities, meetings and events. Here is one piece of advice I have tied to follow to help me in this. Plan your time with family, rest time, vacations and reflection time first and get it on the calendar. Then you can add the things you need to do and have to do for work and your profession. This will give you margin which will protect you and make you even more fruitful in your work because you will have built healthy margin into your schedule.

Try it in 2026. Build some healthy margin into your lifestyle so that you can breathe and enjoy what you are doing without racing to the next thing and the next thing. I believe you will discover that you will be more fruitful in your work and happier in your life!

Build margin in your life and put it on your calendar in 2026!

Have Fun

"*God created everything for our enjoyment*" says Paul in **1 Timothy 6:17**. Did you know God wants you to have fun? He wants you to enjoy your gift of life! So, make it a priority to have some fun in your day, your week, your month your year.

You need to figure out what drains you and what fills your tank. The things that fill your tank are usually things that you enjoy doing and are fun to you. Imagine your body is like a big reservoir full of liquid energy. Near the bottom side of that reservoir is a hole with a hose attached that is letting that liquid energy flow out of you as you give of yourself to your spouse, children, family, work, ministry or service to others. It may be that all those things you are giving yourself out to are good things that you should and ought to be giving to.

However, if you are giving out of that reservoir all the time and you are not replenishing it, what is going to happen? It (you) will eventually drain out completely. So, you must find ways to replenish the energy in order for you to be able to continue to give of yourself to others you love and to the causes you care about. Ideally, you can discover how to tap into that which gives you energy and passion so that your reservoir can continuously be refilled so you are eventually giving out of your overflow instead of draining your reservoir.

If you and I will learn to make having fun a priority for our mental, emotional, physical and spiritual health, I believe we will discover that we can live healthier and happier lives, and we will begin to live and give out of the overflow! So, what you love to do? How do you like to have fun? Plan it. And put fun stuff on your calendar for 2026.

Well, there are several ways you can keep filling up your reservoir as you begin to live and give of yourself out of the overflow. Get outside. Build margin. Have fun.

And here is one more that is often neglected but is the most important....

Engage Worship

The Bible makes it clear that worship of our Creator is a top priority:

"*Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.*" - Psalm 150:6

"*God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in Spirit and in truth.*" - Jesus, John 4:24

"*Do not neglect gathering together for worship as some people do...*"
- Hebrews 10:25

Did you know that people who regularly attend a worship service in community with other believers, according to one recent study, live longer and healthier lives. One study reported that you could add four years to your life by regularly engaging in worship. CNN stated in a study they conducted that, "*Doctors are increasingly aware of the importance of religion for the well being of their patients.*"

But here are the facts. Churches had a whirlwind year along with everyone else in during the COVID Pandemic and things still aren't back to normal. But before the pandemic, however, worship attendance was dropping rapidly across the USA. Regular weekly worship attendance is down from 45% in 1993 to 27% in 2020 to 25% in 2023/2024. Good News: Millennials show a slight surge in attendance (up to 39%), and Millennials are the majority of the country now. Bad News: Cell phone data suggests weekly worship attendance might actually be around 5% (significantly lower than self-reported surveys which indicated 22%). To sum it up, worship attendance has been declining for several decades.

While churches may be adjusting to new worship attendance practices, the truth is that people are still hungry for God, want to know their purpose and many want to grow spiritually. Engaging in worship and being connected with a church family that empowers and encourages you can make all the difference in your life.

Therefore, I want to challenge you to make engaging in worship and connecting with a church family on a regular basis a top priority for yourself and your family. In our church families across the Alabama Emerald Coast Conference of the Global Methodist Church, I have witnessed countless times where families in our churches go through a crisis, a challenge or a death and our church families surround them with prayer, support, care and love as we seek to offer hope, help and hospitality. I have also seen our church families on a regular basis joyfully come around people and families to celebrate a birth, a wedding or some other important milestone. Truth is we need a community of faith around us for our spiritual and emotional health!

Conversely, I have also known many people who have no church family and often suffer alone through a tragedy, a crisis or a death. It is so sad to witness this, but it happens all the time. I honestly do not know how people make it through crisis, tragedy and loss without a loving family of faith around them. They do not know what they are missing. But it doesn't have to be that way.

God designed us to do life together in a community of faith. Please prayerfully consider engaging in worship and connecting with a family of faith if you do not already have one. And if you have a church family but rarely attend, then make it a priority to re-engage. You are needed and you need them too. More than you may know!

Happy 2026!

Make it the best year ever by doing these four simple things:

Get Outside
Build Margin
Have fun
Engage Worship

My wife, Janeese, and I pray this New Years blessing over each of you reading this right now:

*"May the Lord bless you and protect you.
May the Lord smile on you and be gracious to you.
May the Lord show you his favor and give you his peace."*
Numbers 6: 24-26 (New Living Translation)

Blessings in this New Year!

Isaiah 43:18-19 - "Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.



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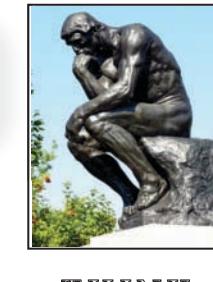
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We wish you a very blessed and Happy New Year!



**John
Sophocleus**

Theophany/Epiphany: Breaking 400 Years of Silence



THINK

Some missed Thanksgiving/Christmas columns this season appreciating lack of AI content/feel reading “**Think**” submissions to the Gazette. Not sure how to take that... further observation of poor wordsmith skills which have grown more endearing? Certainly not my human text superior to artificial. This piece emphasizes 400 years of silence in Old Testament biblical writings; prolog to Jesus enlightenment in His teachings and wisdom on the journey to Calvary/Pascha.

Every January 6th or 19th, dependant upon the New or Old Calendar, Orthodox Christians celebrate Theophany (known as Epiphany in the West) commemorating Jesus’ baptism by John in the Jordan River, recognizing/venerating the start of His ‘public’ ministry. Rev. Dr. Nicolas Kazarian [1/5/26] wrote, “Placing at the heart of the liturgical experience the sacramental role of water in transmitting God’s grace. From the frozen lakes of Minnesota to the balmy shores of Florida, and from the Pacific to the Atlantic, Orthodox Christians come together to bless waters — whether in a small font or a mighty river — by plunging a cross into them. The most courageous participants, often braving icy waters, compete to retrieve the cross, a powerful act symbolizing faith and renewal. These celebrations transcend mere historical reenactments of ecclesial events from 2,000 years ago. They serve as visible signs of the Church’s mission in the world, embodying its sacramental reality. **“By entering the waters of baptism, Christians participate in Christ’s death and resurrection.”** Kazarian cited St. Paul:

By our baptism, then, we are buried with Him and share His death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from death by the glorious power of the Father, so also we might live a new life. Romans 6:4

Western Christians more often align Epiphany with the Magi, highlighting Christ’s manifestation to the Gentiles. **Root translation of Theophany is “manifestation of God”** aligned with more encompassing divine revelation of the Holy Trinity enabling a more complete, closer understanding/relationship with God. Kazarian again cited St. Paul to explain Christ’s illumination and meaning for Christians today:

For when you were baptized, you were buried with Christ, and in baptism, you were also raised with Him through your faith in the active power of God, who raised Him from death. Colossians 2:12

Through baptism, Christians affirm faith in the Holy Trinity; unification with Christ in Death and Resurrection. In the Orthodox tradition, home blessings are an integral part of the Theophany/Epiphany celebration, inviting the priest to bless their residence during this season. While not done at our rural home these past decades, nonetheless we pray God blesses our home each Theophany knowing how tenuously homes are respected/easily taken residing in one of the most corrupt areas in the State. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=66623746>

By Unknown author - Ancient Icon, CC BY-SA 4.0

In keeping with reader comments of past seasonal columns, I’ll revisit some. The column receiving the most attention addressed the ‘Sovelyka’ of East Alabama’s Sodom and Gomorrah. Reporting on Opelika faithful entering 2025 in prayer for Epiphany

(<https://www.alabamagazette.com/story/2024/12/01/opinion/after-another-snopelyka-job-some-lee-county-faithful-still-pray-for-epiphany/5131.html>) in fact witnessed (re)installing Nimrod tree, Gig City, BCA folly subsidies, etc. candidates. Little hope for restoring a better quality of life in this once delightful town I now avoid. Tax incentives increasingly burden existing businesses and citizens neglected proffering cancerous growth which will plague Opelika/Auburn next economic contraction... inevitably terrible to witness in places where government is god. All who know the Power of Jesus Christ’s teachings and take Him into their hearts must overcome the distraction of consumerism, Gig Cities, a State’s Tallest Pagan Tree and destruction by politburo members who’ve made government their god. With the exception of modern nimrods - who doubts the ‘Trump Tower of Babble’ will soon fall?

For those unfamiliar with the Christian heritage I was raised in, excerpts from my 2021 Christmas column:

[<https://www.alabamagazette.com/story/2021/12/01/opinion/christ-is-born-glorify-him/2272.html>] explain many orthodox Christians celebrate Christmas Day circa January 7th to remember Jesus Christ’s birth. This date uses the Julian calendar which pre-dates the Gregorian calendar, more commonly applied/used today. Santa (along with the Easter Bunny) was something morphed into my grandparents’ ‘New World’ education. The ‘Santa Claus’ of my grandparents’ understanding began with Nicholas, born in the village of Patara in 3rd century Asia Minor, then part of Greece on the southern coast of now Turkish territory. Wealthy parents raised Nicholas a devout Christian; they died in an epidemic while he was young.

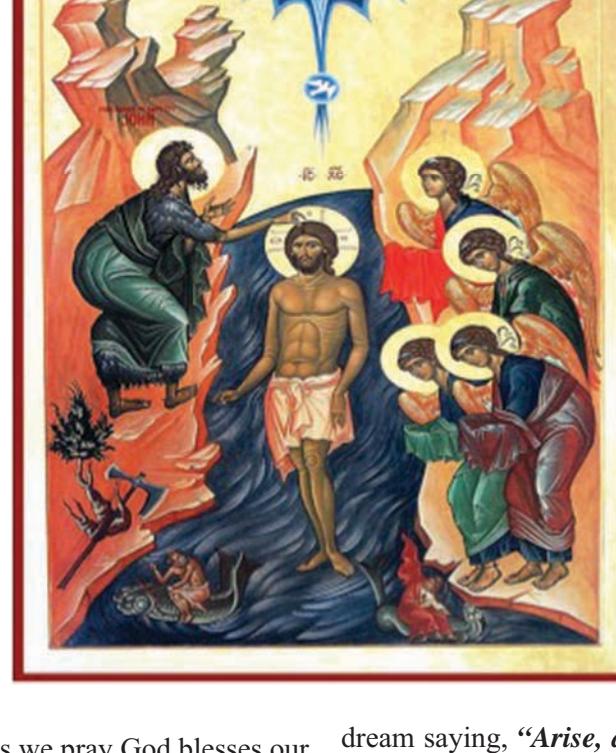
Obeying Jesus’ words to “**sell what you own and give the money to the poor,**” Nicholas used all his inheritance to aid and comfort needy, sick, and suffering. This great dedication to serve God shepherded Nicholas to coronation as Bishop of Myra at a very young age where he became known for generosity to those in need, his joyful love of children, and genuine concern for sailors. Under Roman Emperor Diocletian (a ruthless persecutor of Christians) Bishop Nicholas suffered for his faith... exiled and imprisoned. Prisons were full of bishops, priests, and deacons hated by despotic Romans as Christians received more favor and respect as ones truly “Philoptochos” - i.e., “Friends of the Poor.” After his release (surviving imprisonment) Nicholas attended the Council of Nicaea in AD 325; died December 6, AD 343 in Myra and buried in his cathedral church. Anniversaries of his death became a celebration day in remembrance (St. Nicholas Day) on December 6th; December 19th on the Julian calendar. Continuous veneration of any person who died almost 1700 years ago in the Spirit of Christ is noteworthy. Understandable why ‘progressive’ national socialists championing more command and control government would want St. Nicholas’ story modified.

A favorite Gazette Christmas column

(<https://www.alabamagazette.com/story/2019/12/01/opinion/mary-and-joseph-unplanned-parenthood-33bc/1790.html>) from 2019 addressed the theme of ‘unplanned’ (in this world) birth we venerate each year evoking a similarly titled 2015 Christmas column. After accusation of over-emphasis upon the ‘tax-terror kings’ part of the story - i.e., the cruel tax Caesar Augustus levied coercing Mary and Joseph’s travail to Bethlehem determining Christ’s birthplace -- it focused on the righteous example of this brave union in God’s love who brought Jesus into this world 2,000 years ago. Modern application cited US District Court Judge Myron Thompson’s 2015 Planned Parenthood ruling, further assaulting civil rights of citizens who do not wish to subsidize infanticide. Thompson AGAIN in the Christmas season news for reinserting the federal government into the abortion debate, some still ask why Hyde amendment prohibiting use of federal funds for abortion (except cases where the mother’s life is in danger or pregnancy results from incest/incest) didn’t apply to his flawed injunction ruling.

Hyde addressed a symptom; the source of the problem is unconstitutional federal programs/policies like Medicare/Medicaid imposed by extremists scores ago. In a world of ‘fungibility’ Hyde doesn’t matter; sad how many churches allow government(s) to be their moral compass instead of God’s word. A remarkable thing to recall each Christmas season is God’s willingness to send His Son into a world which shown (since Adam & Eve) a strong proclivity to sin/NOT follow God’s will.

Matthew 1:18-20 explains Joseph’s love for Mary and belief in God was so strong he followed the angel’s instructions to continue the betrothed course and not quietly divorce Mary as she was indeed bringing the Son of God into this world. I find the two Josephs among the most ‘unsung heroes’ of the Bible. Joseph’s (of Nazareth) courage in bringing Jesus into this world and Joseph’s (of Arimathea) courage to go to Pilate for Jesus’ body/preparation for burial exiting this world and His revealed resurrection three days later. Admire Josephs of today who take responsibility for their station. I’ve known good men (and even given testimony in court for some of my former students) who fought to be a part of their child’s lives. I’ve also consoled men who were devastated their child was killed as they were helpless to stop it. The world may be a more grim or more joyful place - God’s word is the key to paradise in the long-run. There was no guarantee Mary and Joseph (especially under such cruel circumstances) would do right; how many young couples today would do a fraction as well? Foolish to assert ‘abortion’ wasn’t known/available then to reduce the illustration of their righteousness. Abortion/infanticide was also an option in 33 BC, Mary and Joseph EARN our veneration each year’s Nativity celebration.



In keeping with the Christmas story, little surprise potentates installed by the central authority used fear and killing of many innocent children to reassert/hold onto power. **Matthew 2:1-16** explains Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea during King Herod’s reign as the wise men travelled to Jerusalem from the East asking, “*Where is He that is born King of the Jews?*” Following His star, they came to behold and worship Him. Herod was troubled by this and gathered his chief priests and scribes demanding where Christ would be born and they answered Bethlehem. Herod ‘privily’ summoned the wise men and inquired on the star’s appearance. Departing for Bethlehem Herod implored the wise men, “Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found Him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.” Witnessing newborn Jesus with Mary, they fell down to worship Him giving gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. After God’s caveat in a dream to not return to Herod, the wise men traveled back another way.

Similarly, the Lord’s angel appeared to Joseph in a dream saying, “*Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt and be thou there until I bring thee word; for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.*” When Joseph awoke, among the most obedient recorded in the Bible, he took young Jesus and Mary by night, departed for Egypt (how’s that for irony?) and remained there until Herod’s death. The wise men averting Herod triggered great rage. King Herod slew all Bethlehem’s children and in the coasts thereof, from two years old and under according to the time he diligently inquired of the wise men. Our modern Roman potentates are just as adept using fear and killing innocent children as Herod in efforts to (re)affirm power and tyranny.

My first Gazette Christmas column [revisited 2017]

<https://www.alabamagazette.com/story/2017/12/01/opinion/a-decree-from-caesar-augustus-for-all-to-be-taxed/1233.html> remains cherished, contemplating how many were still haunted by Miss Greer Garson’s voice opening narrative [1958 animated] of “The Little Drummer Boy,” one of my few indelible remaining ‘Christmases long past’ memories. Garson read the KJV of **Luke 2:1**,

“And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.” Her narration continued with, “To disobey the Roman Emperor meant certain death,” as the viewer watched the diverse procession to Bethlehem, “...young and old; famous and mighty; and some not yet known, but would be revered for all time. They were good people who could ill afford the cruel tax about to be imposed upon them.” The Gospels make it difficult to dismiss this Roman decree determined Christ’s grim birthplace into this world - in a cave with lowly animals and shepherds in the City of David.

Readers of past columns on despotic taxation weren’t surprised I found it timely to type once again about current politburo machinations unfolding in our modern Rome on the Potomac. I often shepherd those interested in reading more on world tax history from ancient times to present to Prof. Charles Adams’ book entitled, “*For Good & Evil: The Impact of Taxes on the Course of Civilization*,” which includes how encompassing the power of Rome applied to Christ’s time on earth. Again, Christ’s earthly journey begins with His birthplace soiled and dictated by Roman despotism as Caesar Augustus mandated return to cities of origin to be taxed.

To understand the meaning of Jesus coming from the lineage of David is very powerful, if not predictable to anyone familiar with the history of that era and Old Testament teachings; the emperor’s role in destroying their Empire. Understand the magnitude of the mission Jesus’ Father set Him upon. If you truly believe and adhere to His teachings, it destroys the power of death and darkness in this world. Without this fear Rome’s (and many leviathans to follow) ability to advance despotic ends is thwarted. Jesus shows us the way - have the courage, faith and wisdom to follow. Failing to fight evil and corruption in our everyday lives fails Him and the righteous efforts many suffered so mankind may not be compelled to (re)endure the agony of Roman despotism.

In closing St. Paul reminds us:

You were baptized into union with Christ, and now you are clothed with Christ Himself. Galatians 3:27

To clothe oneself in Christ throws off the shame of naked sin from the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden start on Jesus’ path to the Garden of Gethsemane. 400 years of silence under the SPOR [Senate and People of Rome] after finally overwhelming the Greeks - think Pyrrhic victories -- who held Rome at bay as Greece no longer championed Empire over decentralized, more representative rule. As Rome allowed the Grecian model decay into despotic empire, deploying hegemonic tetrarchs like Herod... the self-sacrifice of Cato the Younger types (Cato Uticensis well noted by Dante 13 centuries later) wouldn’t suffice against Caesar Augustus despotism where God speaks again, breaking 400 years of silence. When a scribe hands Jesus the coin to trick Him into “Tiberius, worshipful son of the god Caesar Augustus” fidelity - our Saviour couldn’t be fooled. Indeed, “render under Caesar that which is Caesar’s” but no Caesar, past or present is my God.

Postscript: appreciate feedback on initial AU Perspective submissions. Writing a few times each month on Auburn University, there’ll be less AU content in future Think columns, Deo volente.

The views of submitted editorials may not be the express views of The Alabama Gazette.



JUDGE PEGGY GIVHAN

Southern Gardening Potpourri for January



With the waning days of December, we should look back at all the good things we were given over the last 12 months...good health, love from family and friends, finally a hard enough freeze to kill even the most stubborn of insect eggs. The bitter cold did damage to my Sago palms, but after I prune all the fronds back, new growth will emerge and it will live on bigger and better. It is best to totally cut back all of these to the trunk and not just those that look damaged. The same goes for the aspidistra or iron weed since it too will shoot forth new growth in the spring. Remember if you do not cut back now, but wait until late spring, the opportunity for full regrowth may be lost.

Since tulips have been in the crisper for 6 weeks, these can be planted now. But be sure that you have chilled them for a full 6 weeks before planting, so that means if you started say after Thanksgiving, then tulips need another couple of weeks before planting. If they are planted before fully chilled you risk a bloom which is very short stemmed and a complete waste of your hard earned money. If you cannot remember the exact date they entered the refrigerator, leave them in for a couple of weeks. We do not plant tulips in Montgomery until after January 1st because they may rot in the ground since our soil holds so much moisture and the squirrels eat them. One tip I have found helpful is when I plant any bulbs, I hide the existence of this act from bulb predators with leaves or other mulch. All of my knock-out roses appear to have survived and I will prune them in February. It most probably helped that I had heavily mulched them with pine straw in November. As to dusty miller and pansies, which I left outside during this brutal cold, both are alive and well. It appears that the lantana has survived. I did not risk sudden death for my satsuma and lemons trees, plumbago, peace lily, geraniums and dragon wing begonias, thus my back bedroom resembles a greenhouse.

The herbs that I kept outside in the ground with heavy mulch have survived this extreme cold. These include cilantro, marjoram, mint, parsley, rosemary, and verbena. The jury is out for basil. And so much for the post-mortem of the flowers and herbs at my home.



Ironweed
(*Veronica species*)

Sometimes Aspidistra is known as ironweed, but not to be confused with this plant. This is a beautiful flowering tall perennial that is a great butterfly attractor in the garden. It grows from five to seven feet, has emerald green leaves and has a umbrella like clumps of dark purple blooms in late summer and early fall.

Ironweed dies back in the winter and is not an invasive plant. These flowers hold up well in a flower arrangement and once you grow these, they live on. It is native to the United States and will thrive in wet or dry soils.

**Happy New Year!
and
Good Gardening**

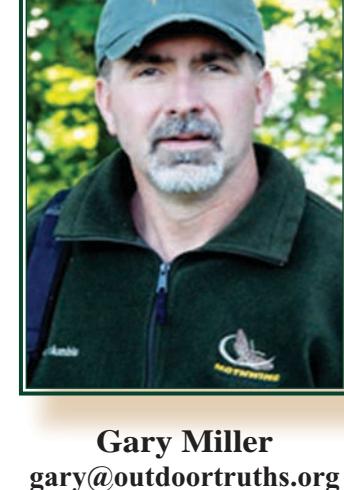


There is NO Retirement from Our Service as Christians

Jason and I eased up the hill toward the place of our morning hunt. He had come a few days earlier and took a leaf blower to the trail to make sure we had the quietest walk possible. Just over the crest of the hill, only about 400 yards from where we parked, was his hunting house. A house

might be an exaggeration. It was only about 4x8 and was in need of a remodel since the year it first built it, but it was still a luxury for any hunter during the cold days of November. As soon as we got situated, we fired up the propane heater. With the shooting windows closed, it didn't take long for our small enclosure to warm up to a comfortable temperature. We could then open our thermos and pour that extra cup of coffee that we are usually unable to have on mornings like these. Because of the insulated walls, we were also able to hold a regular conversation without the thoughts of being heard by any cruising deer. After a few hours of glassing the field for a shooter buck, Jason decided it was time for breakfast. So, he proceeded to bring out his pre-prepared sausage biscuits along with a sheet of aluminum foil. The foil would be used as our cooking pan to warm the biscuits on the heater. After a few minutes in our make-shift oven, hot biscuits were served. And after that, heated honey buns for that annoying sweet tooth. Now who would not want to hunt this way? The truth is, the older I get the more I look for opportunities just like these. In fact, I make them. I have discovered I really want to hunt more comfortably. And I want to leave all the heavy-lifting-hunting to the youngsters. After all, I've done my part.

While this way of thinking about hunting is fine with me, I fight this method when it comes to serving as a part of my Christian life. I constantly fight the desire to retire from Christian service, let the younger ones do it, and just live less committed to doing my part in the lives of others. It would be very easy to live a secluded Christian life – reading, praying, and even worshipping, and let the younger ones take the places I've held for these many years. Let them volunteer. Let them sacrifice. Let them deal with all the drama. I've done my part. I don't need the headaches. I don't have to put up with it. But when I look at those thoughts, I find them slowing moving from others to me. I find myself wanting what I think I deserve instead of what others need and what I am called to do as a Christian. I find I am tempted to forget I am to love God with all my heart and others as myself.



Gary Miller
gary@outdoortruths.org

"Lord, help me remember as I age, there is no retirement from serving you. While the areas I serve may change, the need for my service will not. Retirement is not offered in your benefit package. Amen. Oh, and Lord, help to remind other Christians that retirement is not an option for them either. Amen"

Gary Miller has written Outdoor Truths articles for 21 years. He has also written five books which include compilations of his articles and a father/son devotional. He also speaks at wild-game dinners and men's events for churches and associations. gary@outdoortruths.org



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Be Prepared When Adopting a New Pet

**The Holidays are over and you have a new pet.
These are things to remember when you bring a new pet home.**

PREPARE your home, especially if you are bringing home a new puppy. If a puppy can get something in his mouth, it WILL eat or chew it! That's why it's essential to puppy proof your home and yard. Keep anything dangerous, like cleaning supplies, behind locked cupboard doors or stored up high. Tie all electrical cords out of your puppy's reach.

Use baby gates or exercise pens to keep your puppy confined to safe areas or out of unsafe ones. Check the yard for things like poisonous plants, toxic chemicals, yard tools and look for holes or gaps under gates a small puppy could squeeze through.

Give your new pet time to adjust. There are dogs and a few cats that quickly adapt to their new home with little effort. But there are others for whom the change from their previous situation is more challenging and they will need extra time to adjust to their new home.

Get your new pet into your Veterinarian as soon as possible for a check-up and any needed vaccinations and parasite control to get everyone off to a good start.

Keep new pets confined to limited areas of the house can help greatly in not only house training but just keeping them safe as they learn about their new home. Don't worry if your new pet(s) doesn't eat all that well the first 24-48 hours as they learn new routines.

Let your pet get to know you and your family before taking it out in public as that places even more stress on an animal that might be struggling to feel comfortable with its new owner(s).



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Today's Woman

Trisston's Tidbits:

By: Trisston Wright Burrows

Ms. Wheelchair America/Alabama 2005

site.trisstonwrightburrows.com

"Embrace Your Shepherd Season"



The story of David and Goliath is often portrayed to us as if David was a seemingly naive kid with the equivalent of a toy sling shot who was supernaturally used by God. However, these slings weren't mere toys. These were serious weapons.

In fact, Hannibal the Great, the Carthaginian General known for nearly bringing Rome to its knees in the Second Punic War employed 2000 slingers and his army. One of Rome's leading generals was severely wounded by a slinger in the battle of Cannae, which contributed to his death. So David killed Goliath with a ranged weapon used professionally by militaries across the Bronze and Iron ages and, even into classical antiquity.

If that is the case, then what's the point of the story? David killed Goliath with a common weapon of the time. Big deal, right? So what's the take away then? Perhaps the take away from the story of David and Goliath isn't simply that God will miraculously intercede and slay your giants for you, but rather,

(And this is so important!) God has ordained the mundane in your life to properly equip you for current and future tasks that will require faithful collaboration with Him.

David tells Goliath, *"You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied!"* 1 Samuel 17:45

Think about it. David spent many years as a shepherd. This was basically like the minimum wage job that nobody wanted. He became proficient with the sling out of necessity. With this, he used it to fend off predators that would want to make lunch of his lambs.

What had been mundane, everyday work for David was actually God's divine plan...Equipping this young man with a skill that would one day be paired with his faith and bravery, and with God's guidance.

Now, most of us aren't going to save our entire nations or fight literal giants. However, for each of us, there are future tasks that God will have made us capable of facing through our own shepherding seasons. These seasons may often feel like misadventures or like life going off track, but if you're walking with God, they are not on accident. There's always a purpose.

My friend, if you're going into 2026 and your life isn't quite where you want it to be, think about this. Maybe this is your shepherding season. David honed his skill with the sling in his determination to be a good shepherd, not to slay giants. So let this be a reminder to consistently walk with God. At any time, He may call upon any of us to make use of our experiences, our talents, even our trials. In 2026, embrace your shepherd season!

Happy New Year & Many Blessings!

New Year, New Chapter for Your Health



Sarah Ross Adams

As we enter a new year, many of us feel a renewed sense of possibility. Whether your motivation strikes on January 1st or January 31st, the new year offers something powerful: a fresh start. It's a chance to pause, reflect, and decide what you want to carry forward (and what you're ready to leave behind). Much like the trees outside, winter is a season of shedding. Trees lose their leaves not because they are failing, but because they are preparing. They release what no longer serves them so they can conserve energy, strengthen their roots, and be ready to grow again. Our health can follow that same pattern.

This time of year is an excellent opportunity to take an honest look at your health and lifestyle. You might ask yourself, "How can I be healthier than I was last year?" Maybe it's improving your diet, moving your body more consistently, or finally scheduling those appointments you've been putting off. It might mean getting routine lab work done, checking your blood pressure consistently at home, or following through with preventive screenings like colonoscopies, mammograms, or prostate exams. Sometimes the changes are smaller, but just as important. It may be time to finally get your eyes checked or have your hearing evaluated. Vision and hearing loss often happen gradually, and many people don't realize how much they are compensating until they address it. Poor vision or hearing can affect balance, safety, sleep quality, and even mental health. Addressing these concerns can dramatically improve daily quality of life.

For many middle-aged adults, heart and metabolic health deserve special attention. Conditions such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, and heart disease often develop quietly over time. Lifestyle changes like reducing processed foods, increasing fiber and protein intake, managing stress, staying hydrated, and prioritizing sleep can improve blood sugar control and cardiovascular health. Even modest weight loss can lower blood pressure and cholesterol and reduce strain on the heart.

Movement remains one of the most powerful tools we have. Exercise doesn't need to be intense or perfect to be effective. Walking, stretching, light strength training, or simply standing and moving more throughout the day helps maintain muscle mass, protect joints, improve balance, and support heart health. It may mean waking up earlier to walk before work, moving during television commercials, or lifting your legs and arms while seated.

Equally important is taking medications as prescribed and understanding why you're on them. For some, the goal may be long-term control; for others, lifestyle changes may eventually reduce the need for certain medications. These are conversations worth having with your healthcare provider.

Finally, know when to seek help. New or worsening symptoms (such as chest pain, shortness of breath, dizziness, unexplained fatigue, sleep changes, mood changes, or abnormal blood sugar readings) should never be ignored. Preventive care and regular checkups allow us to catch problems early, when they are most treatable. This year doesn't require perfection. It requires intention. Shed what no longer serves you, strengthen your foundation, and take steady steps forward. Your health journey is not about changing everything overnight, but about writing a better chapter, one healthy choice at a time.

Sarah Ross is a CRNP-C with degrees from UAB, Samford, and Auburn University. She currently resides and works in Birmingham, AL.

Isaiah 40: 29-31
29 He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. 30 Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; 31 but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.



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Call (334) 567-1955



January Support Group Meeting

January 13 @ 5:30 pm - 7:00 pm

Frazer Church
 6000 Atlanta Highway Montgomery, AL
 Room 8114

Elaine Lowery: ABCs of Breast Cancer

Join our free support group meetings at 5:30pm every 2nd Tuesday of the month. Our meetings are open to breast cancer patients, survivors, caregivers, family members, and friends. These meetings feature inspiring talks from survivors, doctors, and other experts. It's also a wonderful opportunity to connect with others who understand your journey.



LIFE ON
 WHEELS



We are serving women in Montgomery, Elmore, and Autauga counties five days a week!
 Check our schedule tab to see our location or call us on the mobile unit at 334-202-4994.

www.lifeonwheelsalabama.com

Home Town Community News

Events - Local Celebrations

MONTGOMERY

Outdoor Ice Rink at Montgomery Whitewater

Nov 14, 2025 to Feb 14, 2026

1100 Maxwell Blvd

Contact Information:

info@montgomerywhitewater.com

9th Annual Seedy Saturday

Jan 24, 2026 10:00 am -12:00 pm

Juliette hampton Morgan Memorial Library

- 245 High Street

Free community event celebrating seeds, substantiability, and local gardening. Whether you are a seasoned gardener or just getting started, this is your chance to: Swap seeds with fellow gardeners, Learn about local gardening initiatives, Get expert advice from Master Gardeners, Discover volunteer opportunities in Montgomery gardens.

Bring your seeds, your questions, your curiosity!

For more info email: farmers@eatsouth.org

Mann Museum Flashlight Tour/Family Fun Night

Feb 27, 2026 5:30 pm - 8:30 pm

Mann Wildlife Museum

325 East Vandiver Blvd, Montgomery, AL 36110

(334)625-4909 Email: zooinfo@montgomeryal.gov

All participants must register no later than Friday Feb 27th at 12:00pm

Non-Zoo members tickets:

\$19 Accompanying Adult, Children 4-12 years old \$35

Mayor's Annual Neighborhood Banquet 2026

Feb 5, 2025 5:30 pm - 9:00 pm

Renaissance Hotel and Spa

201 Tallapoosa St, Montgomery, AL

\$40 per person

(334) 625-2175

PIKE ROAD

Behind the Mask: An Art Show

Jan 25 to Feb 15 2026 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Pike Road Arts Center: 944 Wallahatchie Rd. Pike Road AL 36064

An art show that dives in to the theme of masks in their many facets. Experience the mesmerizing intersection of art, culture, and identity at the Pike Road Arts Center's next exhibition, "BEHIND THE MASK," running from January 25 to February 15. This thought-provoking show features an impressive array of local artists and photographers, who delve into the theme of masks in their many facets.

Art Show Opening Reception:

- Sunday, Jan 25 2 pm - 4 pm

PRATTVILLE

Prattville Mardi Gras Parade

Jan 31, 2026 2:00 pm

Historic Downtown Prattville ~ Autauga County Courthouse

The Mardi Gras Parade will roll out at 2 p.m. from Court Street. It will begin at the Autauga County Courthouse. The Prattville Mardi Gras Celebration will open with food, arts and crafts, and specialty vendors at 11 a.m.

MILLBROOK

The Millbrook Revelers Mardi Gras Festival and Parade

Feb 7, 2026 9:00 am

The Festival grounds will officially open at 9 AM.

The Parade will begin at Noon.

The Mardi Gras Parade starts at noon after the staging at the Mill Creek Park. Millcreek Park is located behind The Smokehouse Bar-B-Q restaurant on Main Street. There will be personnel on site to direct you to your starting position.

The only "theme" for the parade is Laissez Les Bons Temp Rouler or Let the Good Times Roll. Have fun with decorating your entry. Judging will begin at 11 O'clock and all units must be in place at that time to be considered for any prizes.

Alcohol is not permitted on any entry. Entries are encouraged to toss to the crowd Mardi Gras items such as beads, candy, small stuffed animals or other items of your choice. The parade route is over a mile long. Please "pace" yourself in throwing out your items. The crowd will be larger in the area around the Village Green.

WETUMPKA

Elmore County Celebrates America250

- History of the Continental Navy

Sunday, Jan 11, 2026 2:30 pm

The River Room-City of Wetumpka

408 S. Main Street, Wetumpka, AL 36092 334-567-5097

Explore the fascinating history of the Continental Navy during the Revolutionary War in this special Elmore County 250 presentation. Learn how America's early naval forces shaped the struggle for independence and laid the foundation for the U.S. Navy we know today.



Hope Hull Community

Donations can be dropped off at Mosley's store on Hwy 31

CONTACT US

Website: hopehull.us

Facebook: Hope Hull Incorporated

Email: hopehullal@gmail.com

Phone: (334)313-3005 (David)

Important Note:

We also need to begin identifying who will serve as the mayor and the initial five council members. These individuals must be selected from the town-at-large.

As required by Code of Alabama, 1975, Section 11-43-2.

Snowdoun Community

Funds are needed for the groundwork and to move forward.

Snowdoun Community

Website: www.snowdounal.us

Email: snowdounal@gmail.com

Please send your donation to:

Snowdoun Community Center

6145 Norman Bridge Road, Montgomery, AL 36105

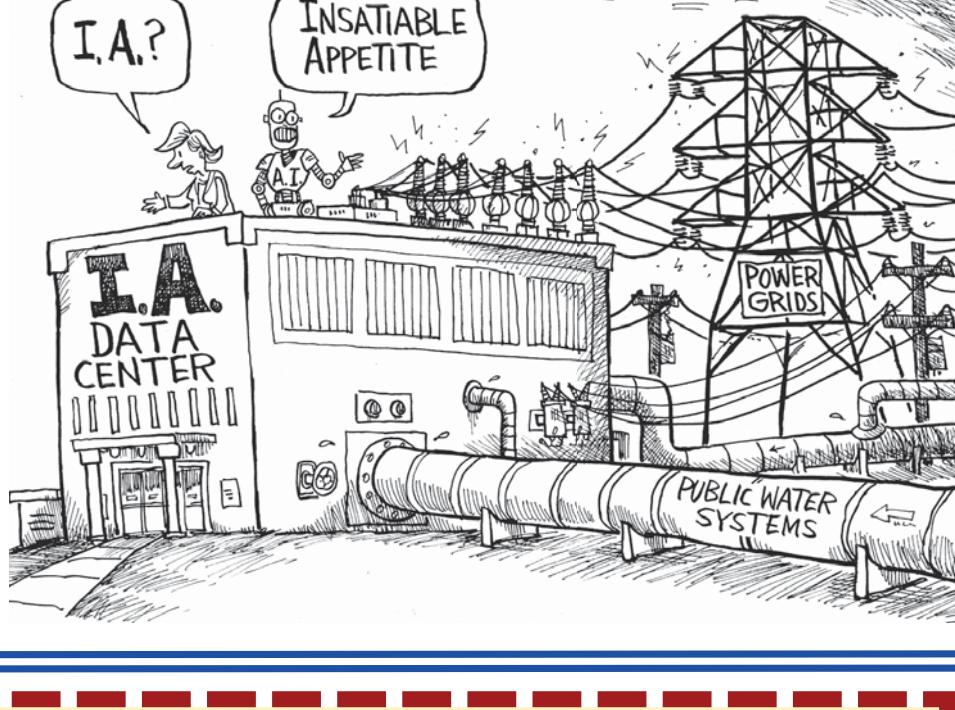
(334)603-1449

WHY INCORPORATE?

- Protect farmland and rural character
- Gain local control over zoning, development, and land use
- Preserve community values
- Support agricultural businesses
- Avoid annexation by the city of Montgomery
- Empower residents to make decisions that directly affect their community.
- Protect property values

INCORPORATION MEANS:

- Local Control
- Protecting our land and agricultural heritage
- Keeping decisions close to home
- Having a say in zoning, development and services, taxation with representation.
- Preserving our community's identity.



DELIVERY PERSONNEL NEEDED!

Help Wanted Immediately!

We need people to deliver our papers to businesses in Montgomery, Prattville, Millbrook, and Wetumpka.

Call: 334-356-6700 Email: alabamagazette@gmail.com

Articles submitted and shared from The Montgomery Rotary Club.



The COGnition

The Official Publication of the Montgomery Rotary Club

Glenn Halbrooks,



Reverend Canon Andrew Rowell
was raised as the son of a Baptist minister and became a follower of Jesus at the age of fifteen. He is married to Miriam "Mimi" Suber Rowell, who is a Critical Care Registered Nurse and serves as a staff RN for First Choice Women's Medical Center. Andrew and Mimi have two sons, Ebenezer ("Eben"), who is ten, and Ezekiel ("Zeke"), and a daughter who is due to make her entrance in March 2026!

Fr. Andrew has a passion for preaching and teaching God's Word, for sending the Church out into the world to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, and for good and godly order in the Church. Andrew is Rector (Head Pastor) of Christchurch in Montgomery, Alabama, the Canon for Governance for the Gulf Atlantic Diocese, and the Chair of the Governance Task Force of the Anglican Church in North America. He is also a Trustee of the American Anglican Council, for which he also serves as Director of Anglican Governance Ministries.

Prior to becoming Rector of Christchurch, Andrew was Associate Rector for Evangelism & Discipleship (2012-15) and Associate Rector for Youth & Families (2008-12) at St. Peter's Anglican Cathedral in Tallahassee, Florida.

Andrew received his undergraduate degree from Duke University (1995, magna cum laude), his law degree from the University of Virginia (1999), and his Master of Divinity from the Duke University Divinity School (2008, summa cum laude). In his prior professional life, Andrew served as a homeless shelter night manager, a speech-writer for the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services, a clerk for the late Honorable Francis Allegra of the U.S. Court of Federal Claims, and a tax attorney at Hogan & Hartson (now Hogan Lovells) in Washington, D.C.

Rotarians gathered for their Christmas party on Monday December 15th

Members were encouraged to bring various items to donate including food, clothing and personal care packages. Afterwards, these gifts were presented to the Jesus City Church for the homeless. A wonderful Christmas message was given by Rector Andrew Rowell of Christ Church of Montgomery sharing the history and similarities between Hanukkah and Christmas. Afterwards, a fun and spirited competition between tables on emoji interpretation and Christmas facts or fiction led to many gifts to be given to many attendees. Christmas music echoed through the Activity Center making for a very festive holiday event.

Donation Drive- Jesus City Church



Thank you, Rotarians!

For bringing blankets, socks, sleeping bags, sweaters, coats, granola bars, peanut butter crackers, canned food, wet wipes, hand sanitizer, etc. for the homeless. We also collected \$80 to give to Pastor Jason Powell to help with any other needs for the homeless.

JOIN A ROTARY CLUB NEAR YOU!

• **Prattville-Millbrook Sunrise**
3050 Lanark Road
Millbrook, AL 36054
334-313-3160
<http://www.prattvillenmillbrooksunrise.rotary.com>

• **RSA Alabama Activity Center**
201 Dexter Ave
Montgomery, AL 36104
Meets Monday, 12:00
Two blocks west of State Capitol.

• **Senior Connection**
304 Park Plaza, Clanton, AL 35045
Meets Wednesday, 12:00
205-755-7105
www.rotaryclubofchiltoncounty.org

• **Montgomery Capital**
Wynlakes Golf & Country Club
7900 Wynlakes Blvd
Montgomery, AL 36117
334-239-0655
Meets Thursday, 12:00

• **Greenville Area Chamber of Commerce**
1 Depot Square
Greenville, AL 36037
334-382-4201
Meets Thursday, 12:00

If you want to learn more about Rotary and its programs, activities and members, consider joining us each Monday (except for federal holidays) at:

Alabama Activity Center - 201 Dexter Avenue.

Learn more about us at

montgomeryrotary.com or www.rotary.org

or call us at 334-301-0597

35th Annual Rotary International Night

35th Annual Rotary International Night

Tuesday, February 3, 2026

6:30 pm – 8:30 pm

National Dress or Cocktail Attire

RSA Activity Center

201 Dexter Ave.

Montgomery, AL 36104

Please RSVP by January 20, 2026



We need 2 volunteers for Wednesday, January 7th and 2 volunteers for Wednesday, February 4th.

Please email Brandi if you can help.



MEALS on WHEELS

MONTGOMERY AL METRO AREA

Contact us at 334-356-6700
The Alabama Gazette Publishing
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us online and in print!