

Quarterly Report

July 2017



Inside:

Business Services Division Completes Same Day Filings for One Consecutive Year!



Secretary Merrill wants to hear from you! Send him an email at John.Merrill@sos.alabama.gov.

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Take a look at this year's Legislative Agenda.



Learn more about the purpose and usage of the Electronic Poll Books.

Secretary Merrill encourages use of the FCPA Online Filing System.



Same Day Business Filings for One Year!



Secretary Merrill and the Business Services & UCC staff.

On June 23, 2017, the Secretary of State's Office reached a new milestone. Due to the hard work and dedication of the Business Services and UCC staff members, all business filings have been successfully processed within one work day for 52 straight weeks!

While campaigning for the Secretary of State's Office, Secretary Merrill discovered that the processing period for the paperwork and payments required for submission to form a new business or entity in the state was seven to nine months behind, meaning that the majority of the paperwork and any accompanying filing fees that were submitted by the business owners were held for seven to nine months.

After working with the Business Services division for his first 12 months in office, the process was still more than two and a half months behind. At that time, it was apparent that a more dramatic restructuring was necessary. The division was restructured with new management from within the organization, and employee accountability measures to increase efficiency were put into place.

In addition to the restructuring, a new policy was implemented. Any work that was not completed by the end of business on Friday must be completed by the Business and Executive teams on the following Saturday morning. This has only occurred once in the last year.

Due to these changes and many others that have been introduced in the office, 27 of the 49 employees that were working in the office on January 19, 2015 left the Secretary of State's Office to pursue other opportunities within or outside state government. Furthermore, while some of those vacant positions have been filled, the office currently maintains only 38 team members working for the people of Alabama. There are now twenty-three percent (23%) fewer employees (11 individuals) than when Secretary Merrill took office on January 19, 2015.

"It's morning in Alabama, and the Secretary of State's Office no longer moves at the speed of government. We are moving at the speed of business!" said Secretary Merrill.

Secretary Merrill Visits Alabamians Across the State



Commencement Speaker for Gulf Shores High School Graduation Ceremony at the Amphitheater

May 15, 2017



Baccalaureate Speaker for Daleville High School Graduation Ceremony at Daleville Baptist Church

May 21, 2017



Speaker for Thompson High School Graduation Ceremony at UAB's Bartow Arena

May 23, 2017



Guest Speaker for Brindlee Mountain Fire Apparatus at Headquarters

May 30, 2017

As a means to increase transparency and extend the services of the Secretary of State's Office to all Alabamians, Secretary Merrill's annual goal is to travel to each of Alabama's 67 counties at least once a year to speak to various groups of all ages, which includes but is not limited to fourth grade classes, graduation ceremonies, dinners, award presentations, and more.

The following list contains a few of Secretary Merrill's visits from around the state.

- Attended and spoke to the Annual Convention of the College Republicans Federation of Alabama at The University Club in Tuscaloosa. April 1, 2017
- Attended the 30th Anniversary Celebration of the J.E. "Ed" Mitchell International Intermodal facility in Huntsville. April 3, 2017
- Attended the Alabama Labor Council and the AFL-CIO's annual Roadkill Barbeque in Montgomery. April 5, 2017
- Attended the Winston County Ronald Reagan dinner in Double Springs. April 8, 2017
- Spoke to the Tennessee Valley Republican Club in Madison for their monthly meeting. April 8, 2017
- Spoke at the 2017 Bryant-Jordan Student Athlete Awards Banquet in Birmingham. April 10, 2017
- Spoke with members of the National Assessment Governing Board at the Capitol. April 12, 2017
- Promoted voter registration and photo ID delivery in Morgan County to over 6,000 people at the Travis Tritt concert. April 15, 2017
- Spoke to the Young Republican Federation of Alabama at the State House. April 19, 2017
- Spoke to the members of the Blount County Youth Leadership class at the State House. April 25, 2017
- Gave keynote address at the centennial celebration of the Gadsden Rotary Club in Etowah County. May 11, 2017
- Spoke at the Gulf Shores High School graduation ceremony at the Amphitheater. May 15, 2017
- Served as the Master of Ceremonies at the 22nd Annual Friends of Historic Northport Heritage Homecoming Luncheon. May 19, 2017
- Spoke to the 2017 Daleville High School Senior class at Daleville Baptist Church. May 21, 2017
- Spoke at the 2017 Thompson High School graduation ceremony at UAB's Bartow Arena. May 23, 2017
- Attended the Alabama Shakespeare Festival in Montgomery's Celebration of the Arts Awards Program. May 25, 2017
- Spoke at Brindlee Mountain Fire Apparatus Headquarters in Marshall County. May 30, 2017
- Attended the United States Global Leadership Coalition in Washington, D.C. June 13-14, 2017
- Attended the opening of the DeKalb County Republican Party Headquarters in Fort Payne. June 17, 2017
- Spoke to students enrolled in Camp I Care in Opelika. June 19, 2017
- Spoke to the international candidates from Maxwell Air Force Base enrolled in the Air Command and Staff College. June 22, 2017
- Served as the keynote speaker at the 50th anniversary of the Northwest Alabama Council of Local Government's banquet in Sheffield. June 22, 2017

FCPA Online Filing System

The Alabama Fair Campaign Practices Act (FCPA) governs how local and state candidates and Political Action Committees (PACs) spend and receive money from constituents. An annual report detailing the contributions made to and funds expended from the account in the previous year must be submitted to the Alabama Secretary of State's Office by **January 31st**, annually. Under Secretary of State John H. Merrill's direction, these reports have been reviewed to determine their adherence to Alabama Law.

In order to make the filing process faster and more convenient, Secretary Merrill encourages the use of the FCPA Online Filing System, which is located on www.alabamavotes.gov. For additional ease of access, the SOS Office has released five instructional videos to guide state candidates and Political Action Committees through the basics of the system. To view any of the FCPA online filing tutorials, click on the images below.

Registrar Training Sessions



On June 27th & 28th, 2017, Auburn University and the SOS Office provided a special training session, where the state's registrars could earn continuing education credits for the first time, while extending their knowledge of their many responsibilities. When Secretary Merrill first addressed the registrars at an association meeting in 2014, they unanimously requested better, more inclusive training sessions. As a result, the SOS Office, in correlation with Auburn University's Department of Political Science, has arranged to provide each county with one regional training session for 2017, 2018, and 2019. The three years of training covers nine courses, and upon completion, the registrars will be fully capable of performing their assigned duties.

Furthermore, the registrars now receive accreditation from Auburn University for completing the training sessions through continuing education credits. In previous years, accreditation was only offered to specific county officials. The SOS Office has also absorbed all costs for the training, professional instructors, educational materials, and the continuing education credits, and all registrars are able to attend free of charge.

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Electronic Poll Books

The average person lives a busy lifestyle. Between working a full and/or part time job, managing bill payments, and taking care of loved ones young and old, modern conveniences that make life's every day tasks more efficient are welcomed with open arms. In a digital age where technology replaces the bygone methods of the past, why not implement a new system that can make one significant aspect of life a little simpler, such as casting a vote on Election Day?

Election Day is both an exciting yet chaotic time, but how often have registered voters decided to skip a trip to their polling place simply because long, burdensome lines await at the check-in tables? In order to eliminate this issue, Secretary Merrill has introduced the implementation of Electronic Poll Books, which allows poll workers to check the names of each registered voter through an online system. Therefore, this new method not only processes the voters at a faster rate since there's no longer a need to sift through a mountain of pages to locate a person's name, but it also eliminates the possibility of the poll workers highlighting an incorrect name by mistake. Additionally, this system allows county officials across the state to instantly update a voter's information at any time.

The Pilot Program for the Electronic Poll Books was launched during the General Election on November 8, 2016, where all of Alabama's 67 counties were given the opportunity to try the system. As a result, Mobile County processed over 650 voters an hour with only four Poll Books on site, and Jackson County processed its voters in a mere 27 seconds per person.

Secretary Merrill is working to provide and distribute Poll Books to the counties in the upcoming elections. For additional information on the implementation and usage of Poll Books and its Pilot Program, contact John Bennett, Deputy Chief of Staff/Communications Director, at John.Bennett@sos.alabama.gov.



Quarterly Accomplishments

- On June 23, 2017, the Secretary of State's Business Services Division has completed same day business filings for one consecutive year.
- The SOS Office released instructional videos on the usage of the FCPA online filing system in June 2017.
- Letters were sent to 1,298 new county officials concerning the requirement to file their reports with the FCPA system.
- The SOS Office worked with Maxwell Air Force Base to assist them in the authentication of their international military pilots' training completion documents.
- The second Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC) mailer was sent to 78,372 Alabamians who aren't registered to vote but have a driver's license or non-drivers I.D.
- The Candidate Filing Guide was updated and is available online for viewing. A printed version of the filing guide will be released later in the year.
- On June 27th & 28th, 2017, Auburn University and the SOS Office provided registrar training with continuing education credits for the first time.

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