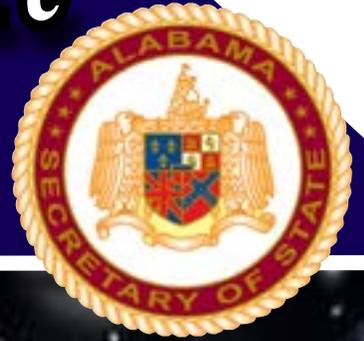


Quarterly Report January 2020



Secretary Merrill Travels to Israel



SOS Office and National Counterintelligence & Security Center Hosts Cybersecurity Training



Secretary Merrill Works with Facebook to Stop the Spread of Misinformation



Alabama Celebrates Its 200th Birthday

Secretary Merrill Travels to Israel

In mid-December of 2019, Secretary Merrill journeyed to Israel with a group of 10 other Secretaries of State to discuss cybersecurity policies and best practices at the local, state, and federal levels relating to business services and election administration. The week-long trip was sponsored by the American Jewish Committee's Project Interchange, and as the Co-Chair of the NASS International Relations Committee, Secretary Merrill is always determined to ensure that Alabama stays up-to-date on all the latest cybersecurity safety procedures. The first meeting was an overview of Israeli politics and society by Dr. Einat Wolf, who is a former member of the Knesset, and was later followed by a meeting with Mr. Roy Zwebner, CEO of Gav-Yam Negev, at the Advanced Technologies Park in Be'er Sheva. There were also presentations on cybersecurity challenges for national infrastructure and a discussion led by Mr. Dan Feferman concerning US-Israeli relations and an overview of the historical relationship between both countries. Furthermore, the group had the opportunity to visit Christian sites on the Sea of Galilee, such as the locations where Jesus met Andrew, Peter, James, and John, fed the 5,000, and preached the Sermon on the Mount, and learn about the Arab Israeli community, the security challenges in northern Israel, and Israel's political system. "I enjoyed working with government and business leaders from across the political and social spectrum, including representatives from Israel's National Cyber Directorate, to identify proactive steps we in America can take to protect the integrity of our elections," Secretary Merrill stated. "Having the opportunity to visit two countries this year and return to the state with new ideas to strengthen our business services, elections, international adoptions, and international relations protocols was outstanding, and I look forward to other cultural exchange experiences in the future."



Cybersecurity & Counterintelligence Training Seminar



In October 2019, Secretary Merrill partnered with agencies across the country to observe National Cybersecurity Awareness Month. Through this initiative, Secretary Merrill sought to increase awareness about the importance of cybersecurity and to provide Alabamians with the necessary resources to be safe and secure online.

On October 18th at 10:00 a.m., Secretary Merrill and Mr. Bill Evanina, Director of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center, hosted a cybersecurity seminar in the State Capitol's auditorium. This program helped election officials from all 67 counties to learn how to improve economic security and increase our nation's security against any international actors looking to influence a U.S. election.

"The Office of the Secretary of State is committed to providing safe and secure elections. We will continue to work with various agencies to ensure we are providing the best practices as deemed by the election community," explained Secretary Merrill.

In addition to conducting election-related cybersecurity training, Secretary Merrill recommends the following suggestions to promote a more cyber-aware environment statewide:

- Enable multi-factor authentication to ensure that the only person who has access to your account is you. Update your banking, email, social media, and any other service that requires logging in.

- Before connecting to a public wireless network, be sure to confirm the name of the network and any other necessary information with the appropriate staff to confirm the network is safe and secure.

- Customize your standard password for different sites to prevent cybercriminals from gaining access to your accounts. Be sure to use different, complex passwords to stay protected.

- Limit the information you post on social media. Seemingly random details can be used to track someone online and in the physical world. Keep personal information private.

- If you are unsure who an email is from (even if the name seems familiar), do not respond or click on any links or attachments. Cybercriminals often use phishing tactics to fool users.

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Secretary Merrill Works with Facebook to Stop the Spread of Misinformation



On December 10, 2019, Secretary Merrill met with representatives from Facebook and Twitter to ensure Alabama is prepared for the 2020 election cycle in the fight to stop the spread of misinformation.

In 2017, the State of Alabama witnessed several attempts to mislead voters through the spread of misinformation on various social media platforms.

Since, Secretary Merrill has worked with leaders from both Facebook and Twitter to prevent similar instances from occurring in the future.

In leading up to the 2018 midterm elections, the Facebook Elections Operation Center removed more than 45,000 pieces of voter suppression and intimidation content, and their efforts have only intensified since then. Their team is constantly working to detect and take down fake networks and accounts.

“It is of paramount importance that the 4.8 million people who make up our state are informed with up-to-date, complete, and accurate information. All election-related information should come directly from our website or from your local election official. We are your trusted source for information related to the elections process,” stated Secretary Merrill.

Election-related information can also be accessed on the mobile app “Vote for Alabama.”

Merrill continued, “We appreciate the support and cooperation of Facebook and Twitter to ensure users are not being misled by blatantly false statements, but instead, are receiving correct information. Today’s meetings are another indication of how prepared Alabama is as we move toward the 2020 election cycle.”

“Further, election security and protocol is higher than ever in Alabama. We continue to introduce new ways to improve security every single day,” noted Merrill.

Secretary Merrill Honors Three Alabamians with the NASS Medallion Award

Curtis Stewart



Todd Strange



Melissa Childers



Date: October 18, 2019

Mr. Stewart is a graduate of the Commerce School of Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia and has worked as a sole practitioner in Atlanta. He was also a manager in the Private Business Advisory and the Governmental practices of KPMG. He joined the Alabama Department of Revenue in 1991 and has held several management positions in various tax administration areas. Mr. Stewart currently serves as the ADOR's Deputy Commissioner, where he oversees the Sales & Use Tax Division and the Business & License Tax Division.

Date: November 8, 2019

A University of Montevallo graduate, Mr. Strange served as Montgomery's 56th mayor from 2009 to 2019. In previous years, he was the Chairman of the Montgomery County Commission for nearly five years, the President, CEO, and co-owner of the Blount Strange Automotive Group, where he managed hundreds of employees, and as the Director of the Alabama Department of Commerce, where he coordinated multiple efforts that brought major industries to Alabama, such as the Hyundai Motor Manufacturing of Alabama facility in Montgomery. He is also the former President of the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind Foundation and has received many prestigious awards for his various contributions to the state.

Date: December 11, 2019

A graduate of Huntingdon College and The University of Alabama at Birmingham, Mrs. Childers worked within the insurance industry for more than 13 years before beginning her legal career with Birmingham's Sirote & Permutt, P.C. She currently works for Maynard, Cooper, & Gale, P.C. as a Corporate Paralegal, and was instrumental in helping the SOS Office implement Act 2019-94 regarding the change of certain aspects in Alabama's corporation law. She also selflessly gave her time and energy to assist in revising forms, pamphlets, and certain parts of the Secretary of State's website to help businesses across the state.

Alabama Celebrates Its 200th Birthday!

The state was abuzz with family fun festivities in celebration of its bicentennial. Alabama officially became a state on December 14, 1819, so in honor of this 200-year milestone of statehood, Montgomery hosted a spectacular festival on the Capitol's grounds. The morning began with a parade down Dexter Avenue, where Secretary Merrill and other state officials, school marching bands, and various state groups made their way down the historic street that Martin Luther King, Jr. led the end of the Selma to Montgomery March in 1965. A dedication ceremony was held in the early afternoon with the reveal of the new Bicentennial Park, and throughout the day, visitors were welcome to an array of booths, vendors, food, and live entertainment, such as reenactments and cultural dance performances. A number of renowned Alabama singers performed at the evening concert on the Capitol's steps, and at the conclusion of the event, the Attorney General's building was awash in bright colors and historic images for the presentation of the bicentennial light show provided by The Poarch Band of Creek Indians. Hundreds of visitors from all over the state were present on this momentous day, and the state looks forward to the bright future ahead.



Secretary Merrill's Quarterly Travels



AL Bicentennial Groundbreaking Celebration in Dallas County
October 5, 2019



First Group of Student Interns Who Will Work the Polls in Prattville
November 1, 2019



Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for display of Alabama's Six
Constitutions at Archives & History
November 3, 2019



Cullman County Christmas Parade in Hanceville
December 7, 2019

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 select few of Secretary Merrill's visits from around and outside the state for the **October through December 2019** quarter.

- Spoke at the Global Ties Alabama Annual Meeting and Diplomacy Luncheon at the Capital City Club in Montgomery. October 1, 2019
- Attended the Wednesday night services at Pine Grove Baptist Church in rural Cleburne County. October 2, 2019
- Met with group of students, faculty members, and administrators from Mills College in California during their visit at the Capitol. October 3, 2019
- Spoke at the Alabama Bicentennial Groundbreaking Celebration in Dallas County. October 5, 2019
- Attended the annual Opening Court Ceremony in the Supreme Court Room at the Heflin-Torbert Judicial Building. October 7, 2019
- Spoke to more than 150 law enforcement officers from around Alabama at the Southeastern Law Enforcement Executive Development Seminar at the Grand National in Opelika. October 10, 2019
- Served as the keynote speaker at the Alabama Coalition on Crime and Delinquency fall conference award luncheon in Opelika. October 10, 2019
- Spoke to more than 150 people gathered for the annual meeting of the Etowah County Volunteer Fire Association at the Attalla Community Center. October 17, 2019
- Spoke at and participated in the annual Aga Khan Walk/Run at Railroad Park in Downtown Birmingham. October 20, 2019
- Participated in site visits to four member agencies of the United Way of Cullman County. October 21, 2019
- Visited with KC Pang and other leaders of Golden Dragon Copper Tubing in Pine Hill. October 24, 2019
- Met with Romania's Ambassador to the United States George Maior during his visit at the Capitol. October 31, 2019
- Spoke to the first group of student interns who will work at the polls in Prattville. November 1, 2019
- Attended the ribbon cutting ceremony at the National Peanut Festival Fairgrounds in Dothan. November 1, 2019
- Spoke at the ribbon cutting ceremony for Alabama's six Constitutions display at the Department of Archives and History. November 3, 2019
- Spoke to approximately 1,800 people in attendance at the Veteran's Day program at Fairhope High School. November 7, 2019
- Interviewed by Donna Feazell on The Afternoon Drive Home in Scottsboro. November 26, 2019
- Met with the Director of the Department of Archives and History Dr. Steve Murray in his office to discuss ways to help underprivileged students take advantage of the scholarship funds from the sales of *Alabama: The Bicentennial*. December 3, 2019
- Spoke to the Lee County Republican Women at their regular monthly meeting in Opelika. December 3, 2019
- Spoke to the members of the Student Government Association at Samford University for their bicentennial celebration. December 3, 2019
- Served as the Grand Marshal of the Cullman County Christmas parade in Hanceville. December 7, 2019
- Spoke to the members of the Millbrook Kiwanis Club in Elmore County. December 11, 2019
- Attended the Alabama Retired State Employees Association annual Christmas party. December 11, 2019
- Met with author Kal James at his book introduction ceremony at Chick-fil-A. December 11, 2019
- Attended the beginning of the Alabama Bicentennial programs at the Montgomery Performing Arts Center. December 13, 2019
- Interviewed by Sarah Killian of WVTM NBC 13 in Birmingham to discuss the trip to Israel. December 22, 2019

Quarterly Accomplishments

- As of **December 27, 2019**, **1,408,088** people have registered to vote since Secretary Merrill took office on **January 19, 2015**, which sets the total to a record-breaking **3,550,398** registered voters.
- As of **December 17, 2019**, the public can now search through more than **9,000 pages** and **800 documents** of **statutory filings** dating back to **1844** on the Secretary of State's website.
- In December 2019, Secretary Merrill announced that beginning **January 1, 2020**, Alabama business owners will no longer have to pay the additional **\$100.00** expedited processing fee when filing for a **business electronically**.
- Anyone who has failed to comply with the **Alabama Fair Campaign Practices Act (FCPA)** will now have the opportunity to **pay civil penalties online**.
- **Colbert County** became the **eighth** county in the State of Alabama to allow **on-line business filings** for the formation of domestic limited liability companies and domestic for-profit business corporations.

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Attention All Undergraduate Students!



Alabama Secretary of State John Merrill is looking for interns to work within the office during the Summer of 2020. If you are 18 years or older and currently enrolled as an undergraduate student, or if you know someone who fits this criteria and may be interested in applying, please see our internship application at <https://www.sos.alabama.gov/sites/default/files/form-files/sosInternshipPacket.pdf>.

FAQs

When is the deadline to apply?

All applications and requested materials must be received by **February 3, 2020**.

Are the essay and recommendation letter mandatory?

Yes. Applicants who do not submit a completed essay along with at least one letter of recommendation from their school advisor or professor will be immediately disqualified. Essays that do not adhere to the assigned topic and word count are also subject to immediate disqualification.

Is this a paid internship?

Yes. All interns will be paid on an hourly basis. The pay will be approximately \$8.27 per hour worked.

How long will I have to work each day?

The office hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and other times as designated, and each employee and intern is allowed a one-hour lunch break each day. Interns must set their work schedules with the Chief of Staff to fit within this time frame. Regardless of the number of hours worked each day and week, all interns are required to work at least 360 total hours (9 weeks) to complete the internship.

Do I have to be a resident of Alabama to apply?

No.

Where can I stay if I don't reside within or near Montgomery?

Please see the page on "Housing Arrangements" in the internship packet. You will be responsible for arranging your housing.

When will I be notified about whether or not I was chosen for the program?

You will receive an emailed and mailed copy of your internship status letter *no later than March 2, 2020*. Please be sure to include a valid email and mailing address in your application.

If chosen, which Secretary of State Division will I be assigned?

Your assigned division depends on your preference, as well as the demand of assistance needed within the office. Most interns work within the Elections and/or Executive Divisions, but some may work within Business Services, the Legal staff, or Information Systems.

If you have additional questions, email Brittany Hamilton at Brittany.Hamilton@sos.alabama.gov or call the Secretary of State's Office at 334-242-7200.

Internships are limited! Apply today!

Office Contact Info.

If you would like to receive a free, printed copy of the SOS Office's 2020 Annual Report, please send your name and a valid mailing address to Brittany.Hamilton@sos.alabama.gov. Offer good while supplies last.

Stay up-to-date with all the latest news from the Alabama Secretary of State's Office.



Don't Miss **Volume 6 Issue 1**,
Coming **April 2020!**

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Government Support / Authentications & Trademarks

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