Secretary Merrill Reflects on the Legacy of Congressman John Lewis

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Submissions Open for 2021 Summer Internship with SOS Office
Secretary Merrill Reflects on the Legacy of Congressman John Lewis

The following is a statement from Secretary Merrill:

“On July 17, 2020, America lost one of her most beloved and courageous heroes, Congressman John Lewis, who leaves behind a legacy of determination, change, and equality.

A native of rural Pike County in Southeast Alabama, Congressman John Lewis grew up experiencing firsthand the difficulties and disparities of racism at the time. Recognizing the need for change, John Lewis set out on a journey to achieve equality for all people through his commitment to non-violent social change.

Dedicated to both education and activism, he recruited hundreds to make that change happen through sit-ins at lunch counters and by crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge, where he so bravely led hundreds more than 55 years ago during the March from Selma to Montgomery. Teaching others about the movement that unfolded right here in Alabama, Congressman Lewis was one of our greatest Civil Rights champions! John Lewis’ legacy serves as a reminder of our past and the long way we have come in this struggle and all we have accomplished! However, we can never forget the work to be done and the long way we have to go.

He once said, ‘If you see something that is not right, not fair, not just, you have a moral obligation to do something about it.’ And those words still ring true today.

During our many visits together, he always left me wanting to do more to ensure that every person, regardless of race, religion, gender, or status, had the opportunity to vote in free and fair elections! These conversations are forever ingrained in my memory.

I will always cherish his friendship and the example he set for me and everyone that is interested in leaving our community, state, nation, and world better than we found it!

His family, friends, colleagues, and all people who desire peace, justice, and equality are in our thoughts and prayers.”

Congressman Lewis laid in state at the Alabama Capitol building in Montgomery on Sunday, July 26th, where many gathered to pay their respects.

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Secretary Merrill Nominates Bryan Stevenson for Two NASS Awards

Throughout the last five years, Secretary Merrill has presented 29 National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) Medalion Awards to Alabamians who have demonstrated outstanding leadership and excellence in various capacities. On July 15, 2020, Secretary Merrill awarded his 29th Medallion to Bryan Stevenson, a lawyer and the founder and Executive Director of the Equal Justice Initiative in Montgomery, Alabama. Secretary Merrill also nominated Mr. Stevenson for NASS’ 2020 Margaret Chase Smith American Democracy Award, and he was declared the winner during the organization’s annual summer conference, which was held virtually in July. Mr. Stevenson will receive the Margaret Chase Smith Award during the NASS 2021 Winter Conference, circumstances permitting.

Born and raised in Milton, Delaware, Mr. Stevenson attended a segregated elementary school in his early years and later graduated from Cape Henlopen High School in 1977. He won many American Legion public speaking contests and earned a scholarship to Eastern University in St. Davids, Pennsylvania, where he graduated in 1981. While a student at Harvard Law School, he was an employee for the Stephen Bright Southern Center for Human Rights, which stands to represent death row inmates in the south. He graduated from Harvard in 1985 with a J.D. degree and also earned a Master’s in Public Policy at the John F. Kennedy School of Government. After completing his education, he relocated to Atlanta, Georgia and became a full-time employee of the Southern Center for Human Rights. Since the center separated its work by region, Mr. Stevenson was assigned to oversee Alabama, where he opened a center in Montgomery. After Congress no longer provided funding for death penalty defenses, Mr. Stevenson transformed the center into the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI), which he supported with the funds he received from a MacArthur Grant.

After founding the EJI in 1989, Mr. Stevenson strove to ensure that the wrongly accused were vindicated and released from prison. Throughout the years, he has won a variety of legal cases that involved eradicating excessive and unfair sentencing, aiding children who were prosecuted as adults, and addressing the abuse of the incarcerated and mentally ill.

In 1987, Walter McMillian, a 45-year-old, black resident of Monroe County, Alabama, was sentenced to death after he was wrongly convicted of committing the 1986 murder of 18-year-old Ronda Morrison at the local dry cleaning store. Once Mr. Stevenson heard about this, he took on Mr. McMillian’s case in post-conviction, where he addressed the court’s suppression of concrete evidence and lies that false witnesses had told on the stand. After spending six years on death row, Mr. McMillian was released in 1993 and finally gained back the freedom that was wrongfully taken from him. In 2014, Mr. McMillian’s story was told in the bestselling, award-winning memoir Just Mercy, which was also adapted into the 2019 film of the same name and won four NAACP Image Awards. Since the establishment of the EJI, Mr. Stevenson and his team have helped more than 135 wrongly condemned prisoners sent to death row and gained relief for hundreds of others who received unfair sentences or incorrect convictions.

Not only has Mr. Stevenson tirelessly worked to assist the wrongly incarcerated, but he is also responsible for the establishment of the Legacy Museum and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery. Between 1877 and 1950, more than 4,400 African American men, women, and children were beaten, drowned, burned alive, and tortured, and until 2018, there were no memorials in place to honor those who faced this horrible treatment. As a result, Mr. Stevenson gained sponsorship through an African American history group and built the memorial on six acres of land. The two sites stand as the nation’s very first memorial dedicated to the legacy of the enslaved, and the memorial has seen thousands of visitors from around the country in the last two years. During the 2019 Democracy Tour held in Alabama, the delegation visited this site and many other historic locations, which made a great impression on the participants.
How to Become a Poll Worker for the 2020 General Election

Requirements:

• Must be a registered voter in the State of Alabama.
• Must be registered to vote at the precinct in which they desire to act as a poll worker.
• Must attend a mandatory poll worker training. There are no exceptions to this requirement.
• Cannot be a member of a candidate’s immediate family or the second degree of kinship and cannot be a member of a candidate’s political committee.

How to Apply:

• Download and complete the Poll Worker Application form, which is available as a .PDF.
• Mail or email the application to your county Probate Judge’s office. The addresses are located on page 3 of the poll worker form.

Additional Information:

• Poll workers who assist with the November 3, 2020 General Election will receive an additional $50.00 supplemental pay, on top of usual county pay, for their increased duties as we work together to protect voters and others involved in the elections process. Student poll workers will only receive $50 pay for the entire day.
• High school or college students age 16 or older can apply to become student poll worker interns. Students must be recommended by a principal, other school official, or the individual responsible for the student’s home instruction program. More information on student poll workers can be found at https://www.sos.alabama.gov/student-poll-worker-internship.

Questions? Contact the Elections Division at 334-242-7210 or your county Probate Judge’s office. A complete listing of Alabama’s Probate Judges can be found at https://www.sos.alabama.gov/city-county-lookup/probate-judges.
Quarterly Accomplishments

- As of September 25, 2020, 1,662,549 people have registered to vote since Secretary Merrill took office on January 19, 2015, which sets the total to a record-breaking 3,663,426 registered voters.

- June 21, 2020 marked four consecutive years of same-day business filings by the Alabama Secretary of State’s Office.

- The SOS Office released two new voter registration and photo voter ID promotional posters, which feature the women of the Alabama Legislature in celebration of 100 years of women’s suffrage and three Alabama veterans to honor servicemen and servicewomen.

- In September 2020, The United States Heartland China Association (USHCA) named Secretary Merrill as the Chairman of the Economic Development Committee.

- In September 2020, the SOS Office released a new portal where Alabama voters who applied for an absentee ballot can check on the status of their application online.

- On September 15, 2020, the SOS Office released the digital copies of the 2020 General Election sample ballots.

- The SOS Office monitored municipal elections for 12 municipalities in the state on August 25th and October 6th.

- The SOS Office worked with ALFA to establish the “Vote to Honor an Alabama Veteran” initiative, where testimonials can be submitted by the public.

- The SOS Office created and released videos to promote becoming a poll worker and voting absentee for the November 3rd General Election.
Attention All Undergraduate Students!

Alabama Secretary of State John Merrill is looking for interns to work within the office during the Summer of 2021. 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/SOSInternshipPacket2021.pdf.

FAQs:

When is the deadline to apply?
All applications and requested materials must be received by February 1, 2021.

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 $8.44 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 1, 2021. 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.

Alabama State Capitol
600 Dexter Avenue
Montgomery, AL 36130

Executive
State Capitol
Suite S-105
334-242-7200

Elections
State Capitol
Second Floor
334-242-7210

Finance
State Capitol
Second Floor
334-353-2022

Alabama State House
11 South Union Street
Montgomery, AL 36130

Government Support / Authentications & Trademarks
State House
Rooms 224 & 226
334-242-7224 / 334-242-5325

RSA Plaza
770 Washington Avenue
Montgomery, AL 36104

Business Entities
RSA Plaza
Suite 580
334-242-5324

UCC
RSA Plaza
Suite 580
334-242-5970

Information Systems
RSA Plaza
Suite 580
334-242-7222

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

Don’t Miss Volume 6 Issue 4,
Coming January 2021!