

Alabama Secretary of State John H. Merrill

Annual Report



Jan.-Dec. 2020



2021

Autauga	Cullman	Baldwin	Barbour	Bibb	Blount	Bullock	Butler	Calhoun	Chambers	Cherokee
						Escambia	Etowah	Fayette	Franklin	Geneva
						Marion	Marshall	Mobile	Monroe	
						Sumter	Talladega	Tallapoosa	Tuscaloosa	
Limestone	Lowndes	Dale	Dallas	DeKalb	Elmore					
						Madison	Marengo			
Conecuh	Lamar	Covington	Lawrence	Lee	Shelby	Winston	Wilcox	Washington	Walker	
								St. Clair	Russell	
Randolph	Pike	Jackson	Cleburne	Clay	Houston	Perry	Henry	Hale	Greene	Chilton
										Choctaw



Left to Right: Mrs. Cindy Merrill, Commander Lee Allen Hallman, and Secretary John Merrill

#All67
 Secretary Merrill has traveled to all 67 of Alabama's counties at least once a year for eight consecutive years with 374 visits in 2020.

Not registered to vote? Have an Alabama driver's license? Visit www.alabamavotes.gov to register through our online system!



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A Letter from Secretary John H. Merrill



Secretary Merrill & Mrs. Merrill at the Cahaba River

January 1, 2021

Dear Fellow Alabamians:

I think we can all agree that 2020 was not the best year with all of the changes and complications brought on by the coronavirus pandemic. Nevertheless, we have hope that 2021 will be a better and more productive year.

Although our office was unable to host and participate in as many events as previous years, we hope you enjoy reading about the things we were able to accomplish in the middle of a worldwide pandemic.

My team and I are always available if you ever need to reach us for assistance. May God bless you all and keep you well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John H. Merrill".

John H. Merrill
Secretary of State



2020 NASS Medallion Award Recipients



Mrs. Merrill, Mr. Stevenson, & Secretary Merrill

Throughout the last five years, Secretary Merrill has presented 36 National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) Medallion Awards to Alabamians who have demonstrated outstanding leadership and excellence in various capacities. On July 15, 2020, Secretary Merrill awarded his 30th 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 the 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.

Mr. Stevenson is also responsible for the establishment of the Legacy Museum and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama, which opened in 2018 and is the first memorial dedicated to the more than 4,400 African American men, women, and children who were beaten and tortured from 1877 to 1950.

On December 2, 2020, Secretary Merrill awarded six additional NASS Medallions to the power cooperatives and state agencies that were instrumental in restoring power to the State of Alabama and ensuring that the technology needed to administer the election was working efficiently, which are the Alabama Emergency Management Agency, the Alabama Office of Information Technology, Alabama Power, the Alabama Rural Electric Association, Electric Cities of Alabama, and PowerSouth.

On October 29, 2020, the Thursday before the historic November 3rd General Election, Hurricane Zeta made landfall in Alabama and caused thousands of power outages and other complications throughout the state. As a result, hundreds of polling locations were affected and left without electricity, as well. Due to the diligence and dedication of these outstanding organizations, electricity was quickly restored to hundreds of polling locations throughout the state, which ultimately led to the successful administration of the 2020 General Election in Alabama.



CEOs, Presidents, & Representatives of the six honored agencies

Celebrating 100 Years of Women's Suffrage & Honoring Alabama Veterans



After decades of debate both for and against women's suffrage, the Nineteenth Amendment was finally ratified on August 18, 1920 – guaranteeing the right to vote for women across the country.

August 18, 2020 marked 100 years of women's suffrage and reflected on the bravery of women's rights activists, such as Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, and the countless others who have paved the way for women today.

Many of these suffragists organized marches, protests, lobbying efforts, and even went to jail to fight for the constitutional right to vote.

Although Alabama did not officially ratify the Nineteenth Amendment until 1953, the state and nation have come an extraordinarily long way in the fight for equal rights.

Today, there are women leading the country in Congress, and the country will soon have its first female Vice President. There are women leading the great State of Alabama in the Governor's Office and in the Legislature, as well.

The SOS Office is proud of its efforts to register voters and issue free photo IDs to see that all who are interested and eligible have the ability to freely participate in democracy. In celebration of 100 years of women's suffrage, the SOS Office highlighted the ladies of the Legislature in an effort to promote participation in the November 3 General Election. As a result, photo voter ID (PVI) promotional posters (see above) were distributed across the state, and the women of the Legislature also filmed a commercial in support of these efforts.



On September 29, 2020, Secretary Merrill, in collaboration with Alabama Farmers Federation and ALFA Insurance, introduced the “Vote to Honor a Veteran” initiative to give Alabamians the opportunity to express their respect and appreciation through voting in honor of a veteran when heading to the polls.

“Alabama is home to more than 380,000 veterans. These brave Americans have defended our right to vote, and I am thrilled to offer Alabamians the opportunity to pay a public tribute to a veteran or active duty service member through offering this online portal to submit testimonials!” stated Secretary Merrill.

Upon submitting a testimonial, Alabamians are sent a lapel pin and bumper sticker in the mail, if they are interested, so they can express their support and appreciation year-round.

The Secretary of State’s Office is extremely grateful to the Alabama Farmers Federation and ALFA Insurance, who has helped to make this project possible through providing resources and assistance.

“We are so supportive of the veterans of this state and this nation. I think we owe it to these veterans to be an informed voter. They fought so we could vote and have a free nation,” said Alabama Farmers Federation and ALFA Insurance President Jimmy Parnell. “I appreciate Secretary Merrill for initiating this program, and I hope it will make each of us think a little deeper about what we are doing when we go to vote.”

Secretary Merrill was joined by Mark Kelley of Election Systems & Software, Lieutenant Colonel Iris Hurd-Hunter, Tamara Cofield, ALFA and Alabama Farmers Federation President Jimmy Parnell, Sergeant Major Harold Jones, and Mylinda Jones Brown in support of this initiative. (See top, right-hand photo).

Since November 3, 2020, voters have the opportunity to select a new sticker expressing their support for veterans when casting their ballot at the polls.

“Voters will now be able to show their appreciation for our veterans each time they head to the polls,” continued Merrill. “We are extremely grateful to Election Systems & Software’s Birmingham Office for working with our office to provide these stickers to voters across the state.”

The Secretary of State’s Office also released a PVI promotional poster (see back cover) and commercial featuring three Alabama veterans: Commander Lee Allen Hallman, Dr. Regina Benjamin, and Captain Gary Michael Rose.

Legislative Agenda 2020

The 2020 Legislative Session was unlike any other previously experienced due to the rapid growth and increasing concerns over the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak in the State of Alabama.

Out of an abundance of caution, Governor Kay Ivey and State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris shut down the state almost completely. Under a “Stay at Home Order,” Alabama businesses were forced to close – leaving thousands of Alabamians without income and filing for unemployment. Only the most “essential” employees were encouraged to continue working in an effort to slow the spread of the virus.

Subsequently, leadership within the Alabama Legislature made the decision to extend their “Spring Break” to protect members and others involved in the legislative process. The break, which was scheduled for two weeks, ended up lasting almost two months.

When the Legislature finally returned to Montgomery on Monday, May 4, 2020, it was decided that only local legislation and bills pertaining to the State General Fund and State Education Trust Fund budgets for Fiscal Year 2021 would be discussed, as to expedite session and pass only what was deemed necessary to move the state forward.

Unfortunately, this decision meant that all matters (excluding HB 272 and HB 202) endorsed by the Office of the Secretary of State would be left sine die upon adjournment.

Due to growing concerns over the Coronavirus, many state resources were used to provide testing supplies and personal protective equipment to various “essential” businesses, including hospitals, clinics, state agencies, and other similar organizations. Because of these depleted funds, many state agencies took a rather large hit in the distribution of resources in the State General Fund. Fortunately, funds made available to the Secretary of State’s Office were unharmed during this process.

On Saturday, May 9, the Alabama Legislature met for the final meeting of the 2020 Regular Session. Rumors about the Governor vetoing the State General Fund circulated through the media. If the veto had occurred, the Legislature would’ve been expected to come back on Monday, May 18 to override the veto.

Bills drafted and supported by the Secretary of State’s Office are as follows:

HB 272 Representative April Weaver / Senator Jabo Waggoner **Status: ENACTED – Assigned Act # 2020-39**

This bill requires state parties to certify candidates for the Offices of President and Vice President to the Secretary of State no later than the 68th day before the election, further allowing the Secretary of State to certify candidates to counties no later than the 66th before the election. This bill is a one-time change to accommodate the November 3, 2020 General Election in which the Republican National Convention is not set to meet to certify the Presidential and Vice Presidential nominees until after the deadline.

HB 202 Representative Bill Poole / Senator Sam Givhan

Status: ENACTED – Assigned Act # 2020-73

This bill allows domestic business corporate types to file directly with the Secretary of State, removing the requirement for businesses to file with the probate office, as well. This bill creates the ability for all entity types to file electronically – streamlining the process for business owners.

HB 37 Representative Charlotte Meadows / Senator Dan Roberts

Status: Died in House of Origin

This bill reduces the period for runoff elections to four weeks in all special and municipal elections in order to be consistent with all county, state, and federal elections.

SB 180 Senator Tom Whatley / Representative Randy Wood

Status: Died in House of Origin

This bill removes the two-witness requirement for people voting pursuant to the federal Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Voting Act (UOCAVA), allowing military members and their dependents to vote with fewer restrictions.

Currently, Alabama is the only state in the country that requires two witnesses on UOCAVA ballots. Three states (Alaska, Virginia, and Wisconsin) require one signature.

HB 213 Representative Andy Whitt / Senator David Burkette

Status: Died in House of Origin

This bill requires all principal campaign committees to file reports and statements electronically with the Secretary of State's Office, increasing transparency and consistency. This "one-stop shop" allows users to track reports in one centralized database.

There are currently 3,000 users in the Secretary of State's online FCPA system. With the passage and implementation of this bill, the Secretary of State's Office anticipates a total of 7,000 users.

SB 211 Senator Billy Beasley / Representative Matt Fridy

Status: Died in House of Origin

This bill allows the Secretary of State to provide digital copies of all bills, resolutions, and memorials electronically by order of either house of the legislature. Coinciding with Act 2019-414, which no longer requires the printing of acts and resolutions, this bill removes the requirement to bind state documents.

HB 277 Representative David Faulkner / Senator Linda Coleman-Madison
Status: Died in Second House

This bill allows a registered voter who is a federal or state prosecutor, federal, state, probate, or municipal judge, law enforcement officer, or the spouse of these individuals to have his or her personally identifiable information omitted from voter lists, except for those lists provided to federal or state agencies.

Upon successful application, everything (mailing or residential address, date of birth, race, gender, voting districts, etc.) but the name of the registered voter will be omitted from generally available lists of registered voters.

SB 304 Senator Tom Butler
Status: Died in House of Origin

This bill revises the procedures used by the Secretary of State and boards of registrars to update the statewide voter registration database based on information supplied by the United States Postal Service (USPS).

Under this bill, beginning in February of 2021 and in February of every fourth year thereafter, the change-of-address information supplied by the USPS will be used to identify voters whose addresses may have changed.

This bill would reduce election expenses paid from the State General Fund by an estimated \$983,000 every four years as a result of reduced postage and printing costs.

NOTE: An amendment to this bill was drafted but never introduced due to the Coronavirus.

SB 306 Senator Donnie Chesteen / Representative David Standridge
Status: Died in House of Origin

This bill establishes the Elections Emergency Act and authorizes the Governor to suspend or delay an election up to 90 days in the event of a declared state of emergency.

This bill would allow the Secretary of State to adopt an elections emergency contingency plan to provide guidance to local election officials in the case an election is suspended or delayed.

NOTE: An amended version of this bill was drafted but never introduced due to the Coronavirus.



SB 286 Senator Billy Beasley / Representative David Standridge
Status: Died in House of Origin

This bill authorizes the Secretary of State and Judge of Probate to conduct a one-time post-election pilot audit after the November 3, 2020 General Election to determine the accuracy of the originally reported outcome and maintain voter confidence.

Three counties (one in North Alabama [Madison], one in Central Alabama [Bullock], and one in South Alabama [Houston]), would've been audited no earlier than November 30, 2020 and no later than January 31, 2021.

Because Help America Vote Act (HAVA) funds have been made available for the use of post-election audits, this bill would come at no cost to the state.

NOTE: An amendment to this bill was drafted but never introduced due to the Coronavirus.

SB 319 Senator Clyde Chambliss / Representative Chris Blackshear
Status: Died in House of Origin

This bill establishes an earlier qualification deadline for municipal candidates and changes municipal election laws to coincide with a four-week runoff election.

This bill was requested by the League of Municipalities in response to the four-week runoff bill.

HB 262 Representative Sam Jones / Senator Greg Albritton
Status: Died in House of Origin

This bill provides for the reimbursement of purchased or leased electronic poll books for election purposes. The bill further outlines the items that can be reimbursed including poll books, support equipment, software updates, and any required maintenance.

For the 1,980 polling places in the State of Alabama, it is recommended by electronic poll book vendors that each polling place have a minimum of two (2) poll books for a total of 3,960 poll books statewide. Poll books and necessary equipment are expected to cost somewhere between \$1,200 - \$1,500 per book. Total implementation could cost upwards of \$5,940,000, assuming every county only purchases two (2) poll books per polling place.

Electronic poll books expedite the check-in process for voters and reduce the possibility for human error when keying in Republican and Democratic voters.

SB309 Senator Malika Sanders-Fortier / Representative Kelvin Lawrence
Status: Died in House of Origin

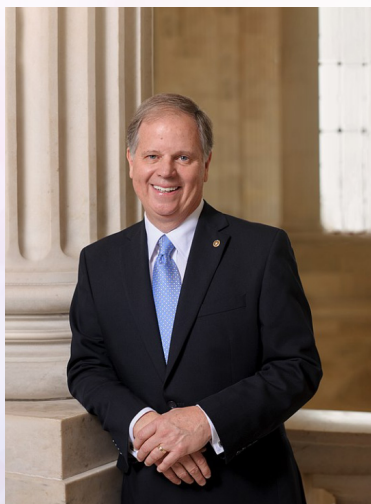
This bill increases the amount of working days for registrars in Wilcox County from 120 days to 167 days, allowing them to complete the necessary work to process voter registration applications and prepare for elections.

2020 Senate and Presidential Election Results

Alabama Senate Election Results



Tommy Tuberville **R**
Votes: **1,392,076**



Doug Jones **D**
Votes: **920,478**

Presidential Election Results



Joe Biden **D**

AL Total Votes:
849,624

Popular Vote Total:
81,283,485

Electoral Vote Total:
306



Donald Trump **R**

AL Total Votes:
1,441,170

Popular Vote Total:
74,223,744

Electoral Vote Total:
232

November 3, 2020 marked one of the most historic General Elections in the country's history. In Alabama, where the candidates for the presidency and a state senate seat were both on the ballot, the counties reported a 62.19% voter participation rate.

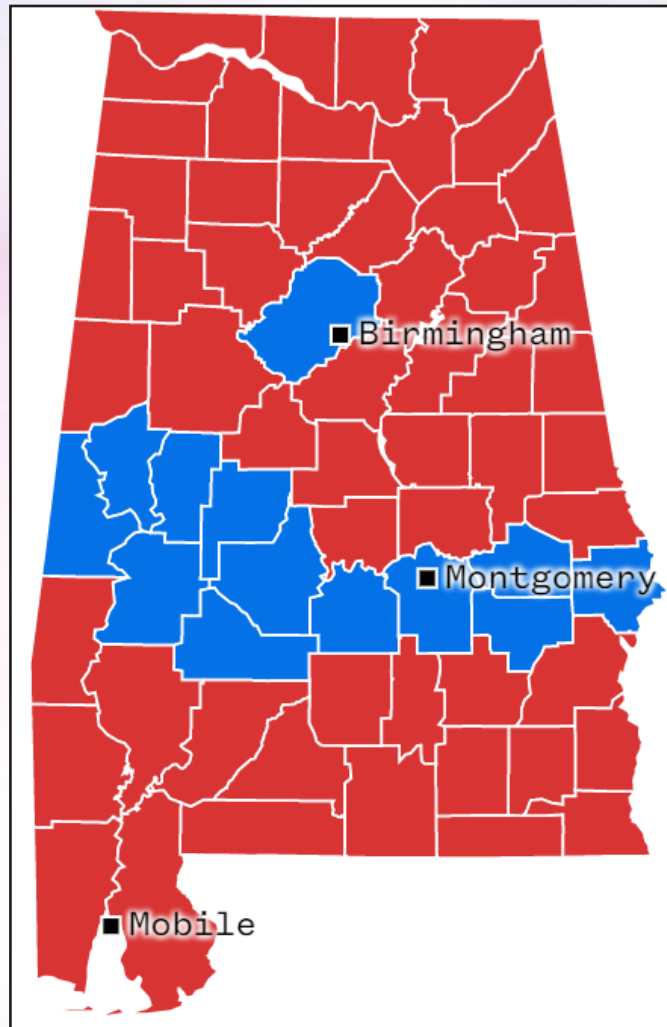
Due to the pandemic, thousands of voters applied for and cast an absentee ballot to avoid the crowds at the polls. With 3,708,804 registered voters confirmed at the time, a new record that was broken right before the close of the October 29th registration deadline, 2,306,587 voted in the election on November 3rd.

When the polls closed at 7:00 p.m., Alabama's 67 counties began counting and reporting their individual results, which were available live to the public on the Secretary of State's Election Night Reporting online system. As a result, Tommy Tuberville claimed the state's senate seat with 1,392,076 votes, while Doug Jones received 920,478 votes. President Donald Trump received 1,441,170 votes in Alabama, which earned him all nine of Alabama's electoral votes. Nationwide, former Vice President Biden earned a total of 306 electoral votes, declaring him the new President-Elect.

The Secretary of State's Office officially certified Alabama's election results at the state canvassing board meeting on November 23, 2020, which consists of the Governor, Attorney General, and Secretary of State. The meeting of the Electoral College was held in the State Capitol's Old House Chamber on December 14th, where Alabama's nine electors cast their votes for president and vice president (see page 12).

President-Elect Biden is scheduled to take his oath of office on January 20, 2021 on the West Front of the United States Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. This will mark the country's 59th presidential inauguration.

County Results for the Presidential Election



	Biden	Trump		Biden	Trump		Biden	Trump
Autauga	7,503	19,838	Dallas	12,230	5,524	Marion	1,463	12,205
Baldwin	24,578	83,544	DeKalb	4,281	24,767	Marshall	5,943	33,191
Barbour	4,816	5,622	Elmore	10,367	30,164	Mobile	79,474	101,243
Bibb	1,986	7,525	Escambia	4,918	10,869	Monroe	4,455	6,147
Blount	2,640	24,711	Etowah	11,567	35,528	Montgomery	64,529	33,311
Bullock	3,446	1,146	Fayette	1,395	7,300	Morgan	13,234	39,664
Butler	3,965	5,458	Franklin	2,086	10,376	Perry	3,860	1,339
Calhoun	15,216	35,101	Geneva	1,595	10,848	Pickens	4,022	5,594
Chambers	6,365	8,753	Greene	3,884	875	Pike	5,636	8,042
Cherokee	1,624	10,583	Hale	4,663	3,192	Randolph	2,203	8,559
Chilton	3,073	16,085	Henry	2,606	6,607	Russell	11,228	9,864
Choctaw	3,127	4,296	Houston	12,917	32,618	Shelby	33,268	79,700
Clarke	5,755	7,324	Jackson	3,717	19,670	St. Clair	7,744	36,166
Clay	1,267	5,601	Jefferson	181,688	138,843	Sumter	4,648	1,598
Cleburne	675	6,484	Lamar	978	6,174	Talladega	13,138	22,235
Coffee	5,076	16,899	Lauderdale	11,915	31,721	Tallapoosa	5,859	14,963
Colbert	8,343	19,203	Lawrence	3,562	12,322	Tuscaloosa	37,765	51,117
Conecuh	2,966	3,442	Lee	27,860	42,221	Walker	4,834	26,002
Coosa	1,796	3,631	Limestone	13,672	34,640	Washington	2,258	6,564
Covington	2,721	14,586	Lowndes	4,972	1,836	Wilcox	4,048	1,833
Crenshaw	1,700	4,864	Macon	7,108	1,541	Winston	974	10,195
Cullman	4,478	36,880	Madison	87,286	102,780			
Dale	5,170	14,303	Marengo	5,488	5,343			

*Alabama map courtesy of NBCNews.com

2020 Electoral College Ceremony

On December 14, 2020, Alabama's 201st birthday, the country's Electoral College was set by law to meet across the United States to cast their votes for the President and Vice President. In Alabama, the meeting of the Electoral College took place in the State Capitol's Old House Chamber at 12:00 p.m. and was hosted by the Alabama Secretary of State's Office. Alabama has nine electoral votes and therefore nine electors, who were:

Dennis H. Beavers of Blountsville (At-Large)

John Wahl of Athens (At-Large)

Jackie Gay of Brewton (Congressional District 1)

Jeana Boggs of Deatsville (Congressional District 2)

Joseph Fuller of Alexander City (Congressional District 3)

John Killian of Fayette (Congressional District 4)

J. Elbert Peters of Huntsville (Congressional District 5)

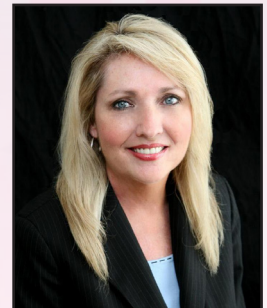
Joan Reynolds of Shoal Creek (Congressional District 6)

Commissioner Rick Pate of Lowndesboro (Congressional District 7)

At the start of the ceremony, Secretary Merrill, Congressman Robert Aderholt, Congressman-Elect Barry Moore, Attorney General Steve Marshall, State Treasurer John McMillan, and the nine Electors led by Uncle Sam (portrayed by J. Danny Cooper of the American Village) formally entered the Chamber floor, while the Homewood High School Band, led by Director Christopher Cooper, played The Washington Post March from the third floor balcony. After Secretary Merrill gave the opening remarks, the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Treasurer McMillan, which was followed by a beautiful performance of the National Anthem sung by Malia Thibado, a student of Victory Christian School in Pell City. Pastor Mark Bethea of Montgomery First Baptist Church led the prayer, and the guests heard remarks by Attorney General Marshall, Congressman Aderholt, and Uncle Sam before the casting and canvassing of the Electors' votes began. As a result, President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence both received all nine of Alabama's electoral votes. The event concluded around 12:45 p.m.

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the Electors, guest speakers, and audience members were required to wear masks and were adequately distanced per the CDC's guidelines. Unlike the 2016 Electoral College Ceremony, the event was not open to the public due to the circumstances, but hundreds were able to watch within the comfort and safety of their homes thanks to the live stream service by Southern Stream Live, paid for by Chairman Terry Lathan and the Alabama Republican Party. The event is still available to watch at <https://algotlivestream.onssl.tv/>.

*Ceremony photos courtesy of Dionne Whetstone and Mike Lewis.





Secretary Merrill and Alabama's Nine Electors



Everyone stands for the Pledge of Allegiance



Malia Thibado singing the National Anthem



The Electors cast their votes for the President and Vice President



The ASU Golden Ambassadors were a great help with the guests



Secretary Merrill and Uncle Sam

Constituent Services

2015-2020

Executive Division

•Treating the Office Budget Like Your Household Budget

~Upon taking office on January 19, 2015, the office (all Divisions included) consisted of 48 employees. As of December 31, 2020, the office consists of 42 employees, excluding the Secretary of State. Since January 19, 2015, 45 employees have either resigned, transferred, retired, or have been released.

~The Personnel Division was phased out. Today, office personnel duties are assigned to 1 existing staff member. Personnel costs were reduced approximately \$60,000 by not having to fill a staff position with this singular responsibility.

~For the period of January 19, 2015 to December 31, 2020, expenses were reduced by \$2,365,004.45.

~In April 2015, four divisions of the Secretary of State's Office relocated to the Alabama State House, which saved taxpayers nearly \$270,000 over the period they were in the State House.

~Beginning with the FY2016 State Budget (October 1, 2015 – September 30, 2016) and at the request of Secretary Merrill, the office no longer receives a State General Fund Appropriation for Administrative Services. The amount the office gave back to the state is approximately \$1.3 - \$1.8 million dollars.

~Secretary Merrill's first letter in office was written to the Chief Examiner of the Alabama Department of Examiners of Public Accounts to request a formal audit in regards to the financial administration of the office. Secretary Merrill is working to turn around nearly a decade of audit and financial issues in the office.

~Although not required, Secretary Merrill issued a 9-page response to the Chief Examiner's audit (for the period of October 1, 2009 through January 19, 2015) that outlined his plan of corrective actions to remedy the seven financial deficiencies. The plan is aggressive and includes a plan of corrective actions to cure several concerns that persisted since another audit (for the period of January 16, 2007 through September 30, 2009) was issued.

•Increasing Transparency

~In 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020, Secretary Merrill visited all 67 counties at least once to discuss voter registration and photo voter I.D. delivery.

~The option to request Public Records/Information became available online.

~Instructed a 24-hour turnaround time to respond to all Public Records/Information requests.

~Informational Releases are sent out to the media on a regular basis.

~Quarterly Reports are issued and placed online at the conclusion of each 3-month period to inform the public of the highlights of each prior quarter.

~An Annual Report is published and placed online at the conclusion of each year to inform the public of the highlights of the prior year.

~To comply with the Alabama Open Meetings Act, meeting minutes have been placed online for boards, committees, or commissions where the Secretary of State is responsible to serve as an administrator.

~Concise descriptions of the funds administered by the Secretary of State are placed online.

~A concise description of the fees provided by law or rule have been placed online.

~A description of the boards, committees, and commissions the Secretary of State serves on are placed online.

~The Probate Judges Advisory Council was created to work with Alabama's Probate Judges and meet the needs of Alabama's counties in their interaction with the Secretary of State's Office.

~In order to increase transparency, all Secretary of State staff salaries were posted online.

~Each year, the SOS Office participates in the United Way's State Combined Campaign. In 2020, the office achieved 107.5% participation and raised \$1,937.02, which is 218.38% of the set goal.

~Since February 13, 2019, all proclamations signed by the Governor and the Secretary of State are available online for the public to view.

~A notary handbook was created in August 2019 as a means to instruct Alabama notaries regarding their responsibilities and laws pertaining to their position.

•Establishing Expectations

- ~Secretary Merrill requires Annual Ethics training for all staff once a year.
- ~Personnel policies were established to ensure certain personnel aspects are properly administrated, and the first personnel handbook for Secretary of State employees was composed to ensure comprehensive employee compliance, expectation, and accountability standards are met.
- ~All employees are evaluated annually on the accomplishment of duties. In previous years, some employees were not issued evaluations.
- ~Secretary Merrill requested that all staff position descriptions include the statement “Delivers service to the citizens of Alabama with a servant’s and helper’s heart” in order to measure employee citizen service. Alabama’s taxpayers and citizens deserve the best, and Secretary Merrill expects his staff to perform as the best.
- ~Division Heads meet once a month with the Chief of Staff to establish and strengthen real team building and informational sharing that were major organizational deficiencies upon Secretary Merrill entering office.
- ~Division Heads are required to teach the application of cross-training to staff to build comprehensive staff abilities, which will benefit their ability to help citizens.

•Legislation

- ~Nine bills sponsored by the Secretary of State’s Office were passed in the 2015 Legislative Session, 11 bills were passed in 2016, 2 bills were passed in the 2017 Legislative Session, 1 bill was passed in 2018, 13 bills were passed in 2019, and 2 bills were passed in 2020.

Finance Division

•Treating Your Money with Respect

- ~Purchases made by the office are required to receive approval prior to purchase. In previous years, a loose purchasing process allowed many purchases that were duplicative, contrary to state purchasing procedures, and/or wasteful.
- ~Payments made to any Division of the Secretary of State’s Office are required to be deposited in 1 day. Prior to this, payments were held as long as several weeks or 7 months before deposit, increasing the chances for NSF charges to be assessed to the issuer. This one requirement to deposit payments in 1 day has, as a by-product, resulted in all the Divisions of the Secretary of State to quickly complete citizen transactions.
- ~On several occasions when vendors conducted business with the state through the Secretary of State’s Office and did not fully fulfill their role, the Secretary requested and received monetary adjustments, which benefited the state.
- ~For the first time, establishing procedures related to the proper administration of bad checks has been issued by the Secretary of State’s Office.
- ~The lack of proper attention given to one Secretary of State fund that was not coded revenue (for deposit therein) for over half a decade has been corrected.
- ~A provision has been inserted into all new contracts that requires a vendor to reduce their invoiced expenses for failure to perform in an adequate fashion.

Elections Division

•Serving Those Who Serve Us

- ~Military voters can now receive and transmit their ballot securely and electronically from anywhere in the world. Previously, military members needed access to a printer and mail service to participate in the election process.

•Promoting Alabama’s Voice in the National Presidential Conversation

- ~Secretary Merrill enthusiastically advocated Alabama joining the SEC Presidential Primary in June 2015, thus moving Alabama’s primary election date to March 1, 2016.
- ~From August 2015 to February 2016, 10 presidential candidates visited Alabama multiple times.
- ~Due to the promotion of the SEC Presidential Primary, 1.25 million voters cast ballots during the March 1, 2016 election, making it the largest turnout (40.68%) in a gubernatorial or presidential primary election.

•Voter Registration

~Since Secretary Merrill took office in January 2015, 1,777,554 people have registered to vote in Alabama, which sets the total to 3,724,701.

~Online Electronic Voter Registration and a voter registration mobile device app were unveiled for the first time in Alabama's history.

~The Secretary of State Voter Registration and Photo Voter ID Mobile Unit works throughout the year by attending numerous statewide community events in all 67 counties at least once per year. The unit can be sent to any community and/or household at any time, 7 days a week, in all 67 counties.

~Alabama Head Football Coach Nick Saban (2015), Auburn Head Football Coach Gus Malzahn (2015), World Boxing Heavyweight Champion Deontay Wilder (2016), former NBA Star Charles Barkley (2016), Miss Alabama 2017 Jessica Procter (2017), the first African American female astronaut Dr. Mae Jemison (2017), American Idol season 5 winner Taylor Hicks (2018), radio talk show stars Rick & Bubba (2018), Country Music Artist Jamey Johnson (2019), Alabama's first Governor William Wyatt Bibb portrayed by a Constitution Village Actor (2019), the women of the Alabama Legislature (2020), and Alabama veterans Commander Lee Allen Hallman, Dr. Regina Benjamin, and Captain Gary Michael Rose (2020) assisted with encouraging voter registration by promoting Alabama's Photo Voter ID Law in the state through the production and distribution of posters and commercials that were shown statewide.

~Since July 2016, an informational video concerning voter registration is available on the SOS YouTube channel.

~The SOS Office registered the one millionth electronic voter registrant on January 23, 2020.

•Working to Ensure Voter Roll Integrity

~Under the authority of state legislation requested by Secretary Merrill, Alabama joined both the ERIC (Electronic Registration Information Center) and the Interstate Voter Registration Crosscheck program in October 2015 to ensure Alabama joined a union of states that work together to crosscheck voter rolls to reduce duplication of names in Alabama and across state lines. In 2016, 1,252,444 Alabamians who weren't registered to vote but had a driver's license or non-driver I.D. received a mailer informing them they could register. 78,372 were sent in 2017, and 76,044 were sent in 2018.

•Increasing Transparency

~Beginning with the March 1, 2016 statewide primary election, each county's elections results have been placed online in real-time on the SOS website, resulting in 100% participation of all Alabama's counties.

~The Alabama Election Fairness Project (an agreement signed between the Attorney General, State Bureau of Investigation, & Secretary of State) was established to ensure more fair elections in Alabama.

~Fair Campaign Finance Reports are under constant review.

~The Fair Ballot Commission information is linked to the website so Alabamians can find information on proposed state constitutional amendments, which oftentimes are hard to understand.

~For the first time in Alabama's history, citizens can purchase voter list information online.

~The Alabama Elections Handbook is available online for the first time to eliminate publishing costs and increase viewer use beyond state and county election officials to be accessible to the general public.

~An informational calendar for all state and local elections is available on the website, including local tax referendums.

~Online information regarding the State Boards and Commissions is updated annually.

~A search feature in the Acts of Alabama online database was implemented to make it easier to find information in the text of a legislative act and determine the author and joint sponsor.

~A government filings link was added to the SOS website.

•Campaign Compliance

~Since June 2017, the office has managed the administration penalties process under the Alabama Fair Campaign Practices Act.

~63 of Alabama's 67 counties utilized the electronic poll books in the November 2020 General Election.

~Since November 2016, the SOS Office has made election results available live to the public on the official SOS website through the Election Night Reporting system. The ENR results are available for every Primary, Primary Runoff, and General Election.

•Assisting Alabama's Counties

~The Secretary of State's administration of the Help America Vote Act Grant Program was reorganized to more adequately serve Alabama's counties (whose local government is closer to the people) to:

- more quickly respond to county requests for use of the grant funds,
- more quickly issue approved grant funds to counties, and
- provide capital asset inventory and surplus guidelines to the counties related to grant funds purchases that are required under federal regulations.

~The office continued to assist Alabama's 67 counties to pay for Handicap Accessible Voting Machines software and maintenance until December 2016.

~Letters were sent to 1,298 new county officials concerning the requirement to file their reports with the FCPA system.

-The SOS Office released instructional videos on the usage of the FCPA online filing system in June 2017.

~The Candidate Filing Guide was updated and is available for viewing online. A printed version of the filing guide was later released.

~The SOS Office sent out guidance to Probate Judges in preparation for educating students for the student poll worker internship program.

~The SOS Office distributed more than 3.2 million dollars to Alabama's counties to help them make the polling locations safe for the 2020 General Election due to Covid-19.

•Registrar Training

~The Secretary of State Office's Elections Division held a Board of Registrars training session, which involved nearly 200 participants and continues to conduct training sessions with Alabama's election officials. The office also maintains and provides a Board of Registrars Handbook.

~A 3-year training program for members of all the County Board of Registrars was initiated.

~Since June 27, 2017, the SOS Office, in conjunction with Auburn University, has provided Registrar training with continuing education credits.

~The Board of Registrars Handbook to aid Registrars in the accomplishment of their duties was updated.

~Starting December 1, 2020, the SOS Office began its tour of all 67 counties in an effort to evaluate the performances of all 201 Registrars in the State of Alabama.

•Stopping the Spread of Misinformation

~In December 2019, Secretary Merrill met with representatives from Facebook and Twitter to ensure Alabama was 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 then, Secretary Merrill has worked with leaders from both Facebook and Twitter to provide that similar instances do not occur again in the State of Alabama.

Business Services Division

•Helping Alabama's Businesses

~On June 22, 2020, all business corporations filings have been filed on the same day they are received by the office (and no later than the next business day) for four consecutive years.

~Secretary Merrill's instruction to deposit funds in 1 day caused all new domestic entities filing for the first time to be issued within 1 day of their Business Entity Number, which is available on the website. This process is a tremendous help to a new business, where banks, lenders, and others can verify the existence of a new domestic entity.

~Upon being informed that the state law provision on the payment of an "expedite" fee related to certain business filings was being processed in 3 business days, the expedition of the filings to be accomplished in less than 24 hours was immediately ordered, as the state law requires.

~Secretary Merrill instructs the Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) sub-division (of the Business Services Division) to accomplish its recordation and filing activities in the time period required by state law (to be fulfilled in 2 days). After a period of adjustment, the UCC sub-division is consistently accomplishing its public duties the same day but no later than the next business day.

~Secretary Merrill instructs the Business Entities sub-division (of the Business Services Division) to accomplish the recordation and filing activities required by state law for the Secretary of State to fulfill (such as

foreign filings, agent changes, name reservations, corrections to name reservations, certificates of existence, and mergers & conversions) in the time period required by state law (to be fulfilled in 7 days). After a period of adjustment, the Business Entities sub-division is consistently accomplishing these public duties the same day but no later than the next business day.

~Secretary Merrill instructs the Business Entities sub-division (of the Business Services Division) to accomplish the recordation and filing activities required by state law, which are issued first to the county Probate Courts (such as all domestic filings) and thereafter sent to the Secretary of State in the time period required by state law (to be fulfilled in 7 days upon the Secretary of State receiving). This activity was aggressively remedied due to the fact that there have been time periods where the tasks were not accomplished until 7 months after the Secretary of State received the domestic filings from the counties. Since June 24, 2016, domestic filings are filed the same day but no later than the next business day.

~Due to domestic entity filings being accomplished at the county level, the office worked with Alabama's counties to establish an "online filings system" for domestic entity filings. Baldwin, Colbert, DeKalb, Elmore, Geneva, Houston, Jackson, Madison, Montgomery, Morgan, and Tuscaloosa Counties utilized the online filings system. Beginning January 1, 2021, certain domestic entity filings will be filed directly with the Secretary of State's Office.

~The online Business Services forms were updated on the new SOS website. Some forms had not been updated in a decade.

~A new process was established to handle fraudulent business filings submitted to the SOS Office.

~The process for ordering House of Representatives Journals and State Senate Journals for each Alabama Legislative Session was restructured. The journals are hard-back bound. Approximately 80-140 sets of House Journals and 80-140 sets of Senate Journals have been ordered each year. By coordinating the activity, only 61 sets of House Journals and 36 sets of Senate Journals are needed, which will reduce the costs paid by the state.

~The process for ordering the Acts of Alabama is better coordinated. By state law, the hard-back bound acts are required to be sent to more than 1,000 recipients statewide. By simply paying attention to the mailing and distribution list through its constant updating, the acts are sent to the proper recipients, avoiding wasteful mailings that lack the proper address.

~The process for providing the pamphlet Acts of Alabama has been eliminated, and the Acts of Alabama are already available on the SOS website. A 2009 state law repealed this process, but the activity was never ceased.

~The SOS Office expanded the digital filing system to include reports issued from other state agencies, such as the Alabama Indian Affairs Commission and the Alabama State Board of Registration for Foresters.

~In 2019, the SOS Office redesigned the public officer commissions for the first time in 40 years.

Information Systems Division

•Providing Services and Saving Money

~The division assisted with the establishment of the Online Electronic Voter Registration system with existing staff, rather than farming out the online development costs to a third party.

~The Homeowners' Associations Electronic Database was established for citizens to search and retrieve documents related to homeowners' associations that were established after January 1, 2016, as required by state law. Existing staff accomplished the work.

~Provides annual notices to state boards, commissions, and committees reminding them to update their membership data.

Authentications, Trademarks, and Lands Division

•Recognizing Alabama's Families

~To highlight and honor Alabama's families, the first International Adoption Day Celebration was held on January 29, 2015, the second ceremony was held on February 5, 2016, the third was held on January 27, 2017, the fourth was held on January 29, 2018, and the fifth ceremony was held on January 25, 2019. The ceremonies highlight Alabama's families and help citizens understand the process and role required of the Secretary of State's Office for international adoptions. Due to a lack of participation and the rise of Covid-19, the SOS Office did not host a ceremony in 2020.

~The SOS Office worked with Maxwell Air Force Base to assist them in the authentication of their international military pilots' training completion documents.

~Trademark renewal notices are mailed by postcard rather than as a standard letter to reduce costs.

~Since March 25, 2019, the office provides for the registration and renewal of trademarks, service marks, and trade names online.

Alabama Athlete Agents Commission

•Modernizing and Saving Money

~The Commission modernized the process for accepting payments to the State of Alabama from Athlete Agents seeking licensing from a paper receipt method to an electronic validation with existing hardware at no additional cost to the state.

~The Commission is working to digitize their agenda process.

Office Contact Information

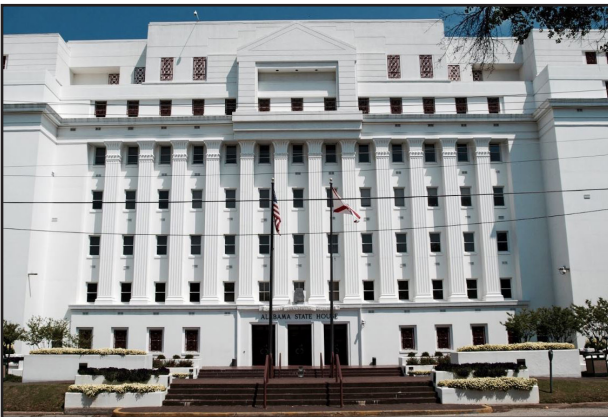


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A Year in Photos 2020





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How to Register to Vote Online:

- Visit www.alabamavotes.gov
- Select "Voter Registration"
- Click "Online Registration"
- Then select "Begin Voter Registration Application"

*Note: You will need a valid driver's license issued by the State of Alabama to register online.

**How to Obtain a Free
Photo Voter ID Card:**

- Visit www.alabamavotes.gov
- Select "Photo Voter ID"
- Download and complete the Photo Voter ID application

***Note: If you have the following, you are not eligible for a photo voter ID:**

- Valid driver's license
- Valid non-driver ID
- Valid Alabama Photo Voter ID
- Valid state-issued ID (any state)
- Valid federal-issued ID
- Valid U.S. passport
- Valid Employee ID from Federal Government, State of Alabama, County Government, Municipality, Board, Authority, or other entity of this state
- Valid student or employee ID from a college or university in the State of Alabama (including postgraduate technical or professional schools)
- Valid Military ID
- Valid Tribal ID

They Fought for Our Rights! Exercise Your Right to Vote!

Commander Lee Allen Hallman
World War II, Korean War, & Vietnam War Veteran



Dr. Regina Benjamin
18th U.S. Surgeon General

Captain Gary Michael Rose
Medal of Honor Recipient



TO REGISTER TO VOTE OR SECURE A FREE ALABAMA PHOTO VOTER ID CARD, PLEASE CONTACT YOUR LOCAL BOARD OF REGISTRARS, VISIT ALABAMAVOTES.GOV, CALL 1-800-274-8683, OR DOWNLOAD THE VOTE FOR ALABAMA APP.
PAID FOR BY THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE JOHN H. MERRILL, MONTGOMERY, AL.

