

Annual Report



Issue 4
Jan.-Dec. 2018



2019



Bullock

Butler

Calhoun

Chambers

Cherokee

Escambia

Etowah

Fayette

Franklin

Geneva

Marion

Marshall

Mobile

Monroe

Sumter

Talladega

Tallapoosa

Tuscaloosa

Blount

Elmore

Marengo

Bibb

DeKalb

Madison

Barbour

Dallas

Macon

Baldwin

Dale

Lowndes

Autauga

Cullman

Limestone



*Cover photos courtesy of WVTM13.com, Alabama Political Reporter, FaceBook, Al.com, Montgomery Advertiser, Southern Torch, & LinkedIn

Chilton
Choctaw
Clarke
Clay
Cleburne
Coffee
Colbert
Greene
Hale
Henry
Houston
Jackson
Jefferson
Montgomery
Morgan
Perry
Pickens
Pike
Randolph

#All67
Secretary Merrill has traveled to all 67 of Alabama's counties at least once a year for seven consecutive years, with more than 530 visits in 2018 alone.

Winston

Wilcox

Washington

Walker

Shelby

St. Clair

Russell

Lee

Lawrence

Lauderdale

Lamar

Crenshaw

Covington

Coosa

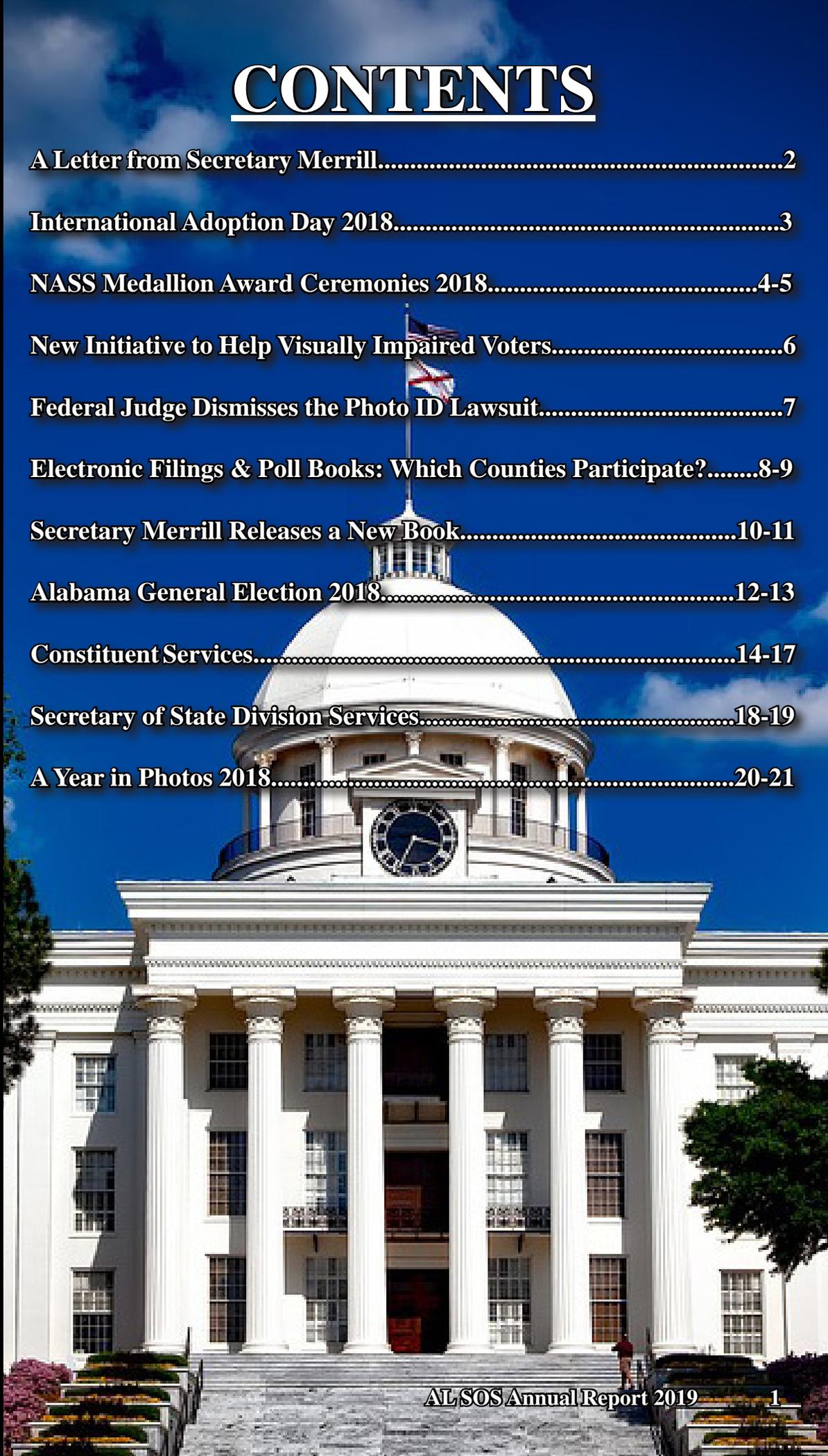
Conecuh

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 Merrill



January 1, 2019

Dear Citizens of Alabama:

Happy New Year 2019! I am so excited to serve a second term as your Secretary of State. The last four years have been outstanding, and our office is determined to ensure that the coming years are even greater.

In this year's issue, you'll find information on our 2018 International Adoption Day celebration, a thorough constituent services report on the previous achievements of the office, the turn-out of the 2018 General Election, and so much more.

If anyone ever needs to reach me or my office, never hesitate to give us a call. We're here to serve the people and will always go above and beyond to assist in any possible way.

Sincerely,

John H. Merrill
Secretary of State

International Adoption Day 2018



The McCullers Family



The Price Family



The Tuck Family with Rep. Paul Beckman

The Secretary of State's Office hosted the 4th annual International Adoption Day celebration on January 29, 2018. The ceremony took place at the State Capitol Building's Old House Chamber in Montgomery, and Secretary Merrill was pleased to honor three more families for their newest, precious additions: The McCullers Family, The Price Family, and The Tuck Family. After Secretary Merrill delivered the welcome and introduction, Yulisa Royston, a senior of Hewitt-Trussville High School, who was adopted from Guatemala at age six, led the Pledge of Allegiance, which was followed by a moment of prayer led by Pastor Chris Erwin of the Church of the Highlands in Montgomery. Josh Caldwell, the International Director of Lifeline Children's Services and an adoptive parent of two, attended the ceremony with his wife, Staci, and their sons (pictured in bottom, center photo), and delivered remarks on the services that Lifeline provides to families seeking to adopt internationally. Afterwards, Secretary Merrill was pleased to introduce Lydia and Sondra Martin, a junior of Hewitt-Trussville High School and her mother, respectively, who shared their heartwarming international adoption experience. Each family received a congratulatory certificate signed by Secretary Merrill and Governor Kay Ivey, and once the ceremony concluded, all the families, guest speakers, and audience members were invited to the Secretary of State's Office for a reception with refreshments provided by Jared and Sarah McCrory of First Baptist Church's Children's Hope. The families were also invited to attend a free, private tour of the State Capitol Building and the Archives and History Museum.

Recognizing that his office is integral in the process that allows numerous international adoptions to occur, Secretary Merrill began International Adoption Day in January 2015 to celebrate and congratulate the families in their selfless efforts to adopt internationally. Hundreds of Alabama citizens decide to increase their families by offering their loving homes to children from other countries that are party to the Hague Convention and beyond. These countries require specific documentation that must be authenticated or certified by the Alabama Secretary of State's Office before granting the adoptions of their children.

Fifth Annual International Adoption Day: January 25, 2019



Photographs Courtesy of Dionne Whetstone

NASS Medallion Award Ceremonies 2018

“The NASS Medallion Award allows individual Secretaries of State to recognize outstanding service and dedication to furthering the mission of the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) within the states.”

-www.nass.org

2018 Medallion Award Recipients:

Deputy Attorney General
Brent Beal

Deputy Chief of Staff / Press Secretary
John Bennett

Chief of Staff
David Brewer

Elections Analyst
Brittany Hamilton

Business Services Division:

Business Entities:

Renae Barron
Jim Brasher
Lovetta Churchill
Melissa Giddens
Stephanie Keithahn
Monica Messer
Tamara Moore
MeMe Mulcahy
Brianna Smith
Diane Starks
Elaine Swearingin
Christina Vandiver

Uniform Commercial Code (UCC):

Sharranda Emerson
Beth Hall
Beth Jensen
Shirleen Moncrief
Alfreda Watts



Presentation Date: April 30, 2018

Name: Brent Beal, Deputy Attorney General

Duties: Oversees the passage of bills sent to the Legislature through the Secretary of State’s Office, reviews and investigates voter fraud reports, and provides legal counsel to the Secretary of State.



Presentation Date: April 30, 2018

Name: John Bennett, Deputy Chief of Staff / Press Secretary

Duties: Oversees the operations of the Secretary of State’s Information Systems Division, designed and implemented Alabama’s first online voter registration system, handles all media correspondence, and manages the counties’ usage of the electronic poll books, etc.



Presentation Date: April 30, 2018

Name: David Brewer, Chief of Staff

Duties: Directs the administrative, operational, and financial responsibilities of all the Secretary of State Office’s Divisions and staff members.



Presentation Date: April 30, 2018

Name: Brittany Hamilton, Elections Analyst

Duties: Writes and mails all Resolutions from the Secretary of State’s Office, produces and sends out the Quarterly & Annual Reports, assists Spanish-speaking constituents, oversees the internship application process, and creator of the Elections Cat resources for children, etc.



Presentation Date: September 26, 2018

The Alabama Secretary of State Office’s Business Services staff members, which consists of Business Entities and Uniform Commercial Code (UCC), were honored with the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) Gold Medallion Award on September 26, 2018. Due to the dedication and perseverance of the 17 employees, the division has managed to file all business corporations filings within the same day they are received and no later than the next business day for more than 130 consecutive weeks. The staff is determined to continue this streak of excellence. The Business Entities staff includes Renae Barron, Jim Brasher, Lovetta Churchill, Melissa Giddens, Stephanie Keithahn, Monica Messer, Tamara Moore, MeMe Mulcahy, Brianna Smith, Diane Starks, Elaine Swearingin, and Christina Vandiver. The UCC staff includes Sharranda Emerson, Beth Hall, Beth Jensen, Shirleen Moncrief, and Alfreda Watts.

New Initiative to Help Visually Impaired Voters

On September 20, 2018, Alabama Secretary of State John Merrill announced a new initiative by his office to help Alabama voters with visual impairments have better experiences participating in state elections.

While speaking in the auditorium at the Alabama School for the Blind, Secretary Merrill told ASB staff and students that Alabama voter guides would now be available in Braille. Also, he said election officials have been better trained in the use of the AutoMARK voting machine, which helps voters with visual impairments read and mark their ballot. Secretary Merrill was joined onstage by the 17th president of the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind, Dr. John Mascia, as well as Clay Helms, the Elections Director in the Secretary of State's Office. ASB students, representatives of national advocacy groups for the blind, and local elected officials were also guests at the event.

“Our goal of making it ‘easy to vote and hard to cheat’ applies to each and every Alabamian – including those who have physical challenges or disabilities,” Secretary Merrill said. “To ensure we accomplished meeting the needs of these constituents in the most effective manner possible, I asked my team to host a meeting with the state’s many advocacy groups for the blind and visually impaired. During this meeting, the representatives of these groups suggested several changes that could be made to dramatically improve the ability of voters with visual impairments to participate in the electoral process.”

The meeting with advocacy group representatives happened earlier this year, and the idea for the new election material began as a result of that partnership.

“We appreciate these groups working with us to be part of a solution, especially for providing the materials to the state free of charge,” Secretary Merrill said. “They are uniquely positioned to understand this issue and help us solve it, and that’s why we wanted to sit down and listen to their ideas. This is a great example of how government agencies and private groups can work together, and we want to thank them for their help and support.”

Secretary Merrill urges anyone who had issues with voting due to physical impairment to call their local probate judge’s office or the Secretary of State’s Office at (334) 242-7200.

*



Federal Judge Dismisses the Photo ID Lawsuit

Alabama Secretary of State John H. Merrill is excited to announce that U.S. District Judge L. Scott Coogler has issued a 69-page ruling dismissing a lawsuit regarding Alabama's Photo ID Law. This ruling came as a result of a lawsuit that was filed by the Alabama NAACP and the Greater Birmingham Ministries, which charged that the Photo ID Law was created with a racially discriminatory purpose and violated the Voting Rights Act and the U.S. Constitution.

Secretary Merrill has worked tirelessly to ensure that every Alabamian has access to a Photo ID and that Alabama's only goal when it comes to the administration of elections is to ensure that every Alabamian has access to participate in a secure elections process. The Judge indicated in his ruling that "it is so easy to get a Photo ID in Alabama, no one is prevented from voting."

Judge Coogler went on to assert that the ways in which Secretary Merrill has implemented the Photo ID Law provide proof that Secretary John H. Merrill is committed to ensuring every eligible Alabamian is afforded the opportunity to participate in the electoral process and to determine the people that represent them at the local, state, and federal level.

In regards to the ruling, Alabama Secretary of State John H. Merrill stated the following: "This ruling adds to the growing consensus from people all over the state and nation that we should begin to look to Alabama as a leader in the area of free, fair, and secure elections."

If you would like to obtain a free photo ID in Alabama, visit <http://sos.alabama.gov/alabama-votes/photo-voter-id/obtain-free-photo-voter-id>

To Qualify for a Free Photo Voter ID:

- 1) Must be a Registered Voter in Alabama
- 2) Provide ONE of the following:
 - ~Birth Certificate
 - ~Marriage Certificate
 - ~Official School Record
 - ~Military Record
 - ~Non-Valid Photo ID (expired license, student or employee ID, etc.)

*

Do I Qualify???



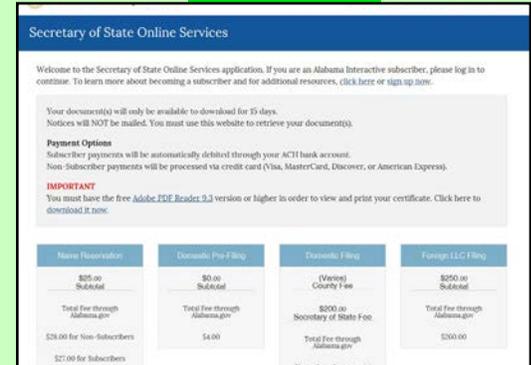
Electronic Filings & Poll Books: Which Counties Participate?

As of 2018, Baldwin, Elmore, Jackson, and Montgomery Counties are utilizing the new online business filings system, which allows prospective business owners to submit their filing documentation online to the Secretary of State's Office and the County Probate Judge's Office. Currently, participating counties can file only Domestic For-Profit Corporations and Domestic LLCs, but additional services will be added over time. Alabama's other 63 counties are welcome and encouraged to join and may possibly choose to switch to the new system in the near future. The state absorbs the cost.

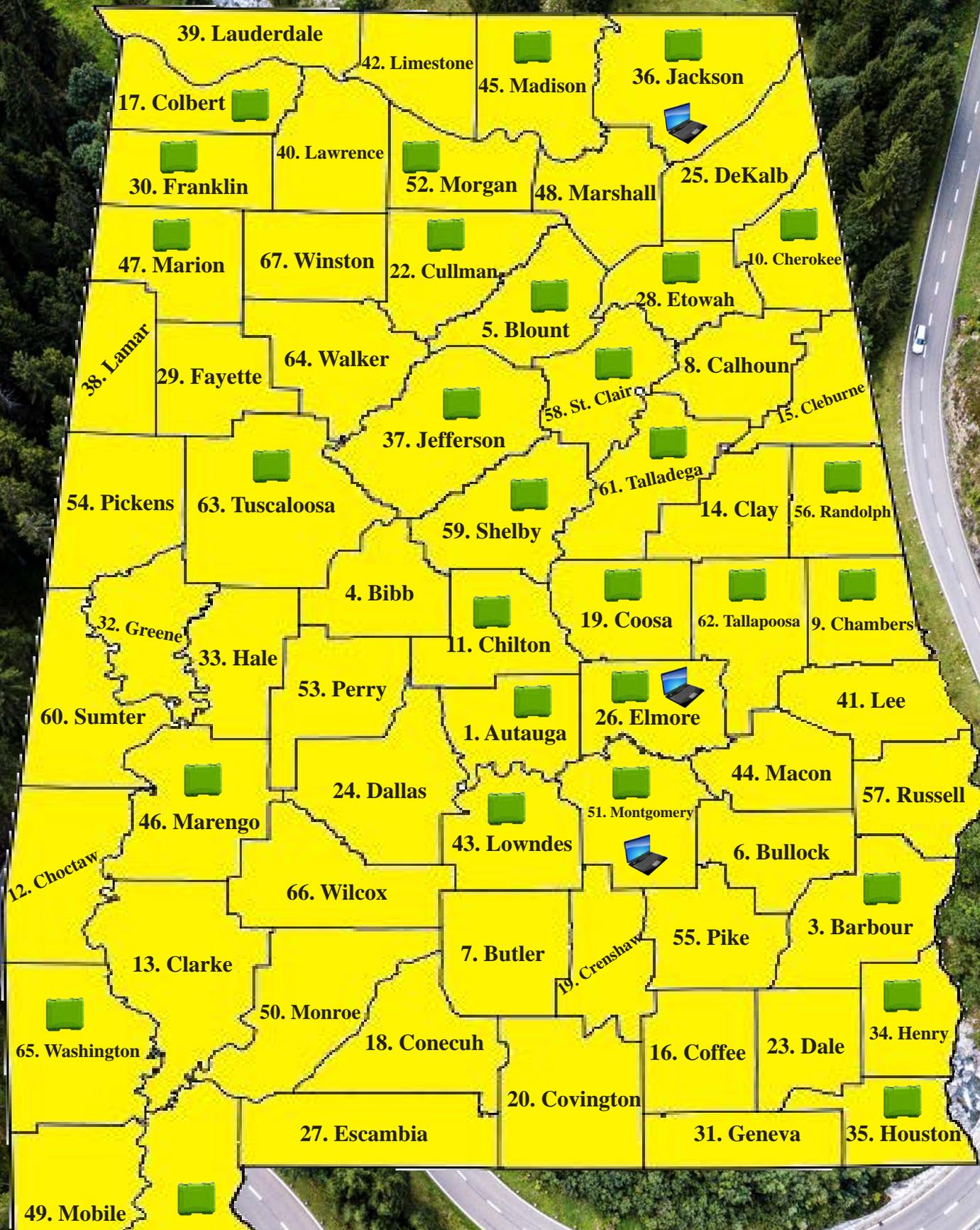
The electronic poll books were introduced in 2016 as a means to eliminate long check-in lines at the polls. As a result, voters can sign in and receive their ballot in a matter of seconds, as opposed to the traditional way of sifting through a large stack of pages to locate and highlight a voter's name. The electronic poll books also eliminate the possibility of a poll worker marking an incorrect name by mistake. Currently, 30 out of 67 counties utilize the electronic poll books. By 2022, Secretary Merrill hopes to have poll books at every polling station in all 67 counties.

Please see the below listing, as well as the following map, to see if your county uses the electronic business filings system and/or the electronic poll books.

- | | | | |
|----------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1. Autauga ✓ | 20. Covington | 39. Lauderdale | 58. St. Clair ✓ |
| 2. Baldwin ✓ | 21. Crenshaw | 40. Lawrence | 59. Shelby ✓ |
| 3. Barbour ✓ | 22. Cullman ✓ | 41. Lee | 60. Sumter |
| 4. Bibb | 23. Dale | 42. Limestone ✓ | 61. Talladega ✓ |
| 5. Blount ✓ | 24. Dallas | 43. Lowndes ✓ | 62. Tallapoosa ✓ |
| 6. Bullock | 25. DeKalb | 44. Macon | 63. Tuscaloosa ✓ |
| 7. Butler | 26. Elmore ✓ | 45. Madison ✓ | 64. Walker |
| 8. Calhoun | 27. Escambia | 46. Marengo ✓ | 65. Washington ✓ |
| 9. Chambers ✓ | 28. Etowah ✓ | 47. Marion ✓ | 66. Wilcox |
| 10. Cherokee ✓ | 29. Fayette | 48. Marshall | 67. Winston |
| 11. Chilton ✓ | 30. Franklin ✓ | 49. Mobile | |
| 12. Choctaw | 31. Geneva | 50. Monroe | |
| 13. Clarke | 32. Greene | 51. Montgomery ✓ | |
| 14. Clay | 33. Hale | 52. Morgan ✓ | |
| 15. Cleburne | 34. Henry ✓ | 53. Perry | |
| 16. Coffee | 35. Houston ✓ | 54. Pickens | |
| 17. Colbert ✓ | 36. Jackson ✓ | 55. Pike | |
| 18. Conecuh | 37. Jefferson ✓ | 56. Randolph ✓ | |
| 19. Coosa ✓ | 38. Lamar | 57. Russell | |



“ ✓ ” = Electronic poll books
 “ ✓ ” = Electronic business filings



“” = Counties that use Electronic poll books
 “” = Counties that can file Domestic For-Profit Corporations and Domestic LLCs online

Secretary Merrill Releases a New Book



Throughout Alabama's rich history, its people have invented, created, inspired, led, and even changed the world.

Who invented the portable hearing aid, the windshield wiper, Wikipedia, and the Super Soaker? *Alabama: The Bicentennial* has already become more of an event than a book. The 365 profiles of the people, events, groups, and places that have defined the state's history weave a story that will entertain and capture the imaginations of people of all ages and backgrounds. The book's photos and graphics keep the attention of just about anyone opening its pages.

Who was kidnapped as an infant, but later became the first American non-president honored with a national monument?

Who was the first American doctor to surgically repair a wounded heart?

Which small Alabama town once had the busiest airport in America?

What town of 1,399 people produced a baseball hall of fame pitcher and a presidential candidate?

What musical act produced 21 songs in a row that hit number one on the charts?

*Who spent ten years trying to convince his employers that his magazine idea of *Southern Living* could succeed?*

Which nun took a vow of poverty then founded a global television network?

Who turned down Woodrow Wilson's offer to become Vice President of the United States?

The seemingly endless stories - hidden gems of global impact and transformed lives - deliver the type of book that the State of Alabama and its people truly deserve.

Note: Although Secretary Merrill is the author of *Alabama: The Bicentennial*, he has not and will not receive compensation in any form. 75% of the proceeds will go towards scholarship funding for the "Friends of the Alabama Archives," which will provide opportunities for under-privileged students to take class field trips with no additional cost to the schools.

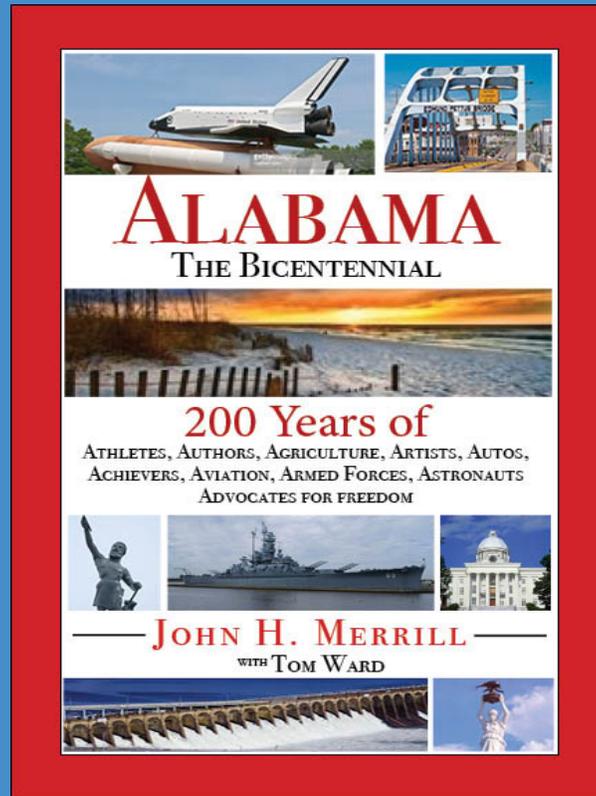
Alabama: The Bicentennial can be purchased through the "Friends of the Alabama Archives."

Visit <https://www.friendsofthealabamaarchives.org>.

The Bicentennial Book

Portrait of a People

Introducing the book designed for all of us, including millennials, senior citizens, students, and people of all backgrounds.



"If history were taught in the form of stories, it would not be forgotten."

-- **Rudyard Kipling**

200Alabama.com

inventors

AUTHORS

CIVIL RIGHTS LEADERS

poets

Musicians athletes

BUSINESS PIONEERS

military heroes

astronauts educators

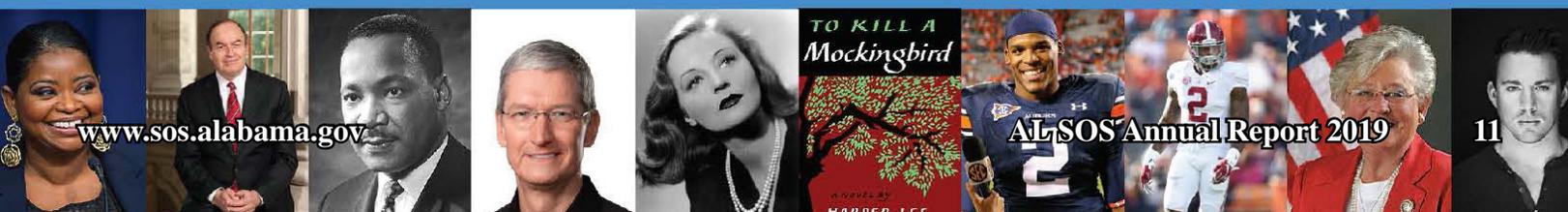
#ordinarypeople

#powerfulhistory

What does Wikipedia have in common with hearing aids, peanut butter, Mardi Gras, and windshield wipers?

* You and your friends will enjoy the seemingly endless impact of Alabama's people on the world.

TAX DEDUCTIBLE PURCHASES — 75% of the \$20 purchase price benefits the Friends of the Alabama Archives' 4th grade field trip scholarship fund.



Alabama General Election 2018

The Alabama General Election took place on November 6, 2018, and despite the inclement weather conditions, all polling locations opened promptly at 7:00 a.m. After the polls closed 12 hours later that evening, each county immediately began tallying their votes and posting the results on the Secretary of State's Elections Night Reporting website. The below information reflects the official results for the seven Constitutional Officers. To view the official results for the other state offices, please visit <https://www.sos.alabama.gov/alabama-votes/voter/election-information/2018>.

General Election 2018 Results (Constitutional Officers):

Date: November 6, 2018

Voter Turnout: More than 1.7 million (Midterm Election Record)

Final Results (Constitutional Officers):

Governor: Kay Ivey (R)-1,022,457 ; Walt Maddox (D)-694,495

Lieutenant Governor: Will Ainsworth (R)-1,044,941 ; Will Boyd (D)-660,013

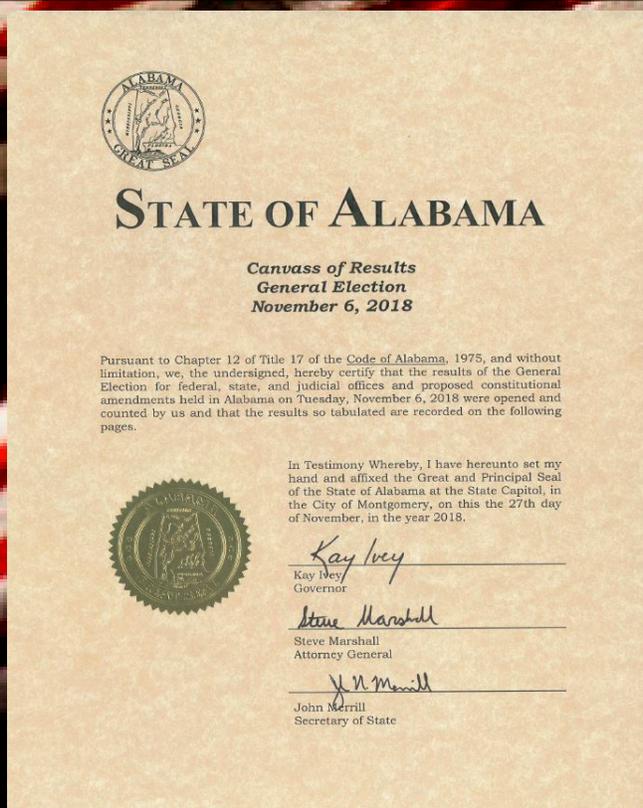
Attorney General: Steve Marshall (R)-1,004,438 ; Joseph Siegelman (D)-702,858

Secretary of State: John Merrill (R)-1,032,425 ; Heather Milam (D)-658,537

State Auditor: Jim Zeigler (R)-1,018,466 ; Miranda Joseph (D)-665,679

State Treasurer: John McMillan (R)-1,085,054 (unopposed)

State Commissioner of Agriculture: Rick Pate (R)-1,081,431 (unopposed)



The General Election results were officially certified at the Secretary of State's Office on November 27, 2018.

Alabama's Seven Constitutional Officers



**Governor
Kay Ivey**



**Lieutenant Governor
Will Ainsworth**



**Attorney General
Steve Marshall**



**Secretary of State
John H. Merrill**



**State Auditor
Jim Zeigler**



**State Treasurer
John McMillan**



**State Commissioner of Agriculture
Rick Pate**

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Constituent Services

2015-2018

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, 2018, the office consists of **40 employees**, excluding the Secretary of State. Since January 19, 2015, **32 employees have either resigned, transferred, retired, or have been released**.

~**Phased out the Personnel Division**. Today, office personnel duties are assigned to one 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, 2018, **expenses were reduced by \$2,144,882.59**.

~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, and 2018 Secretary Merrill **visited all 67 counties** at least once to discuss voter registration and voter photo I.D. delivery with more than 530 individual visits in 2018 alone.

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

~**Instructed a 24-hour turn around 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.

•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.
- ~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, performance clause 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, **1,171,604 people have registered to vote in Alabama, which sets the total to 3,474,796.**
- ~**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, Auburn Head Football Coach Gus Malzahn, World Boxing Heavyweight Champion Deontay Wilder, former NBA Star Charles Barkley, Dr. Mae Jemison, Miss Alabama Jessica Procter, American Idol Season 5 winner Taylor Hicks, and radio co-hosts Rick and Bubba** assisted with encouraging voter registration by promoting Alabama's Photo Voter ID Law in the state.
- ~Since July 2016, an informational **video concerning voter registration is available on the SOS YouTube channel.**

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

•Campaign Compliance

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

•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 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 will be released later in the year.

•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.
- ~Commencing June 27, 2017, the SOS Office, in conjunction with Auburn University, will provide Registrar training with continuing education credits for the first time.
- ~The Board of Registrars Handbook to aid Registrars in the accomplishment of their duties was updated.

Business Services Division

•Helping Alabama's Businesses

- ~On **December 31, 2018**, 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 more than two consecutive years (**more than 130 weeks**).
- ~Secretary Merrill's instruction to deposit funds in one day caused **all new domestic entities filing for the first time to be issued within one 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 three 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 seven 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 seven 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 is **working with Alabama's counties to establish an "online filings system" for domestic entity filings. Currently, Baldwin, Elmore, Jackson, and Montgomery Counties**

utilize the online filings system. Secretary Merrill is working with other counties to sign on.

~Since the above domestic entity online filings system is not mandatory to be used by all Alabama's counties, *an "online pre-filings system" was established for citizens to voluntarily use to form domestic entities.* The online pre-filings system started by only allowing domestic LLCs to be administrated, but the system was expanded to all domestic entities (LP, LLP, LLLP, domestic corporations, and domestic non-profit corporations) in July 2016.

~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.

Government Support Division

•Coordinating Activities and Saving Money

~*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 over 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.

Information Services 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, and the fourth was held on January 29, 2018. The ceremonies highlight Alabama's families and help citizens understand the process and role required of the Secretary of State's Office. The fifth ceremony will be held on January 25, 2019.

•Providing Services

~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.

~In the Spring of 2019, the office will provide for the registration and renewal of trademarks, service marks, and trade names online.

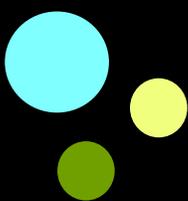
Alabama Athlete Agents Commission

•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.





Secretary of State Division Services

The Code of Alabama assigns more than 1,000 different duties to the Alabama Secretary of State’s Office, which are divided among seven divisions: Executive, Elections, Finance, Government Support / Authentications & Trademarks, Business Services (Business Entities), Business Services (Uniform Commercial Code), and Information Systems. Each division is located in Montgomery, Alabama.

Executive Division

As directed by Secretary of State John H. Merrill, the Executive Division plans and directs the administrative, operational, and financial operations of all the divisions in the Secretary of State’s Office. The division is also responsible for maintaining the database of all commissioned Notary Publics and Civil Law Notaries.

If you need assistance from the Executive Division, please contact:

David A.Z. Brewer, Chief of Staff
The State Capitol, Suite S-105
600 Dexter Avenue
Montgomery, Alabama 36130
(334) 242-7207

Finance Division

The Finance Division develops budget requests, operational plans, and budget revisions for both the Secretary of State’s Office (SOS) and the Alabama Athlete Agents’ Commission (AAAC). The division keeps accurate financial records on all financial transactions for both the SOS and AAAC and organizes these materials for regular audits. Further, the division assists with the preparation and administration of rental leases/renewals, purchase/delivery orders, professional service contracts, orders supplies and equipment, prepares bid specifications for consumable orders, issues orders, and verifies deliveries for both the SOS and AAAC.

If you need assistance from the Finance Division, please contact:

Renee S. Reese, Finance Director
The State Capitol, Suite E-205
600 Dexter Avenue
Montgomery, Alabama 36130
(334) 353-2022

Elections Division

The Elections Division oversees voter registration, photo identification for voting purposes, voter fraud, absentee voting, and campaign finance in the State of Alabama. The division manages the statewide voter registration and election management system, the online voter registration system, and the Alabama Fair Campaign Practices Act campaign finance reporting system. Furthermore, the division certifies and maintains all official election and voter registration records, including the results of elections, and provides uniform guidance on election procedures to constituents, voters, candidates, political parties, and elected officials throughout the state.

If you need assistance from the Elections Division, please contact:

Clay Helms, Elections Director / Supervisor of Voter Registration
The State Capitol, Suite E-208
600 Dexter Avenue
Montgomery, Alabama 36130
(334) 353-7177



Government Support / Authentications / Trademarks Division

The Government Support / Authentications / Trademarks Division is responsible for authenticating documents for use in foreign nations. The division is responsible for registering trademarks, trade names, and service marks, as well as creating a statewide database in accordance with state and federal guidelines. The division also assists with the administration of the clerical duties for the Alabama Athlete Agent Commission and validates and assigns act numbers to bills and Constitutional Amendments adopted by the Alabama Legislature during Session. Furthermore, the division distributes the Code of Alabama to various recipients entitled to the same under state law, ensures binding and distribution of House and Senate Journals, issues Public Officer Commission certificates to recipients in accordance with state law, issues Certificates of Service to judges relative to their retirement benefits for the Administrative Office of Courts, maintains the register of Alabama Board of Interior Design members, and registers Oaths of Offices for various state and county officials, both elected and appointed.

If you need assistance from the Government Support / Authentications / Trademarks Division, please contact:

Karie Wilkerson, Assistant Division Director

The State House, Room 224 / 226

11 South Union Street

Montgomery, Alabama 36130

(334) 242-7224

Business Services: Business Entities Division

The Business Entities Division records domestic entity filings (formed in the State of Alabama) and foreign entity registrations (formed outside the State of Alabama) to the public record. The division reserves business entity names, provides both certified and non-certified copies of documents, and Certificates of Existence to the public. Further, the division provides the electronic means to obtain name reservation certificates, certificates of existence, certified or non-certified copies of documents, and certain formation/registration filings.

If you need assistance from the Business Entities Division, please contact:

Elaine Swearengin, Business Entities Director

RSA Plaza Building, Suite 580

770 Washington Avenue

Montgomery, Alabama 36104

(334) 242-7221

Business Services: Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) Division

The Uniform Commercial Code, which governs the filings made in the UCC Division, is located in Title 7, Article 9A of the Code of Alabama (1975). The division processes UCC1's, UCC3's, UCC5's, Farm – UCC1F and UCC3F, Search Requests – UCC11, and Farm Registry – UCC20's. These liens are usually placed on certain personal property, such as equipment, accounts receivable, etc., that normally cannot be titled or deeded, such as automobiles, aircraft, boats, and real estate. Each UCC is validated, the data is entered and scanned into the Secretary of State's central computer system, and each filer may process up to 1,500 monthly.

If you need assistance from the UCC Division, please contact:

Beth Hall, UCC Director

RSA Plaza Building, Suite 580

770 Washington Avenue

Montgomery, Alabama 36104

(334) 242-5970

Information Systems Division

The Information Systems Division is responsible for supporting and maintaining the technical infrastructure for the office staff and the information technology systems. This encompasses supporting all web-based election activities and business filing processes. Staff in this division are also responsible for supporting county voter registrars as they access the statewide voter registration system.

If you need assistance from the Information Systems Division, please contact:

John Bennett, Deputy Chief of Staff / Acting Information Systems Director

The State Capitol, Suite S-105

600 Dexter Avenue

Montgomery, Alabama 36130

(334) 242-4133

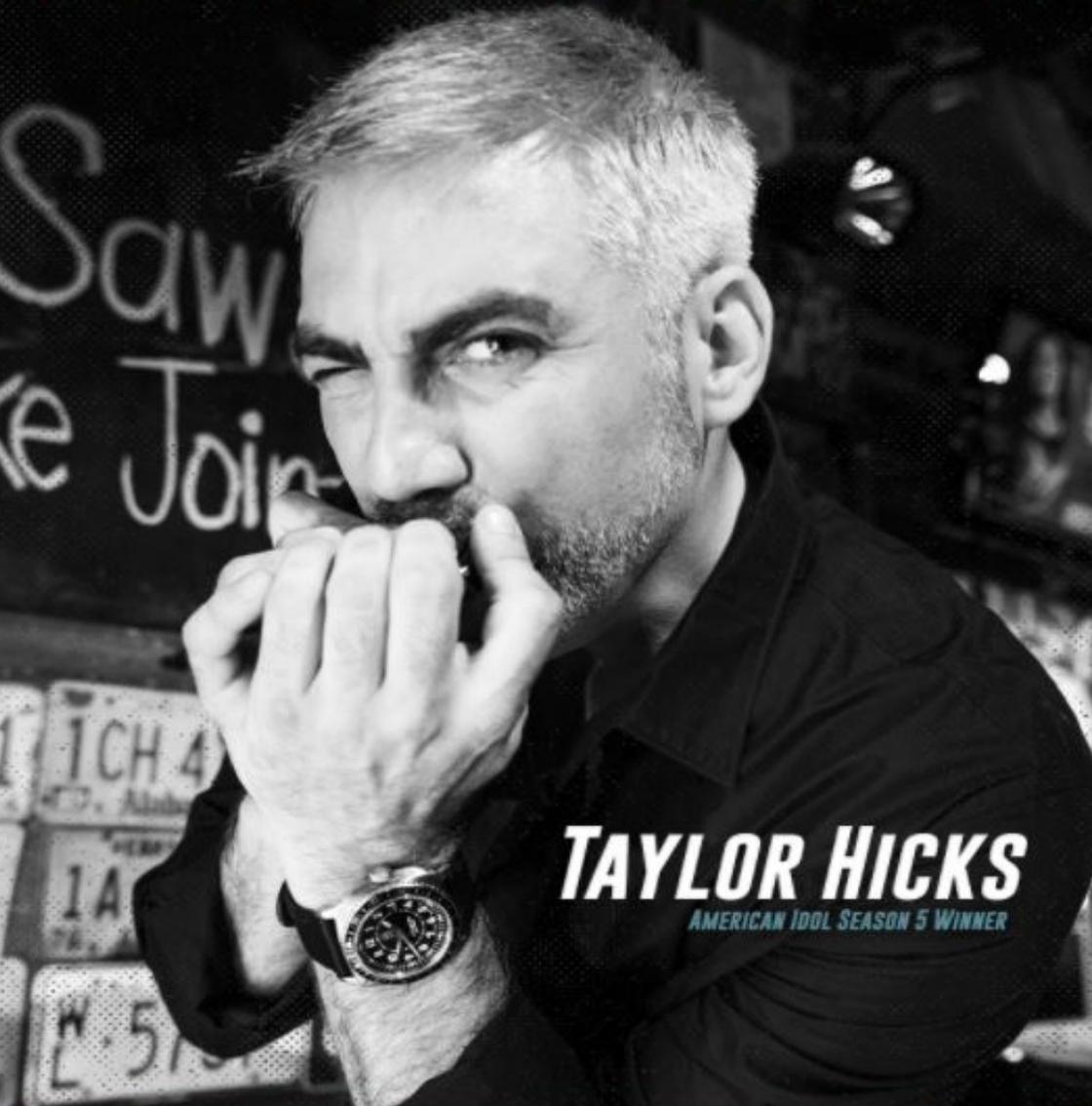
A Year in Photos 2018





Office of the Secretary of State
Alabama State Capitol
P.O. Box 5616
Montgomery, AL 36103-5616

**AS THE LARGEST RECIPIENT OF VOTES IN
THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN IDOL, I KNOW
EVERY VOTE COUNTS.**



TAYLOR HICKS
AMERICAN IDOL SEASON 5 WINNER

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 US 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

*

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 MERRILL, MONTGOMERY, AL.

