

Annual Report 2020



Alabama Secretary of State John H. Merrill

Jan.-Dec. 2019

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



#All67
 Secretary Merrill has traveled to all 67 of Alabama's counties at least once a year for seven consecutive years with 611 visits in 2019.

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



CONTENTS

A Letter from Secretary H. Merrill.....	2
Inauguration Day 2019.....	3
International Adoption Day 2019.....	4
Democracy Tour 2019.....	5
NASS Medallion Award Ceremonies 2019.....	6-7
Photo Voter ID & Voter Registration Promotions.....	8-9
International Relations Trips to China & Israel.....	10-11
Alabama's Bicentennial Celebration.....	12
Constituent Services.....	13-17
Office Contact Information.....	18-19
A Year in Photos 2019.....	20-21

A Letter from Secretary John H. Merrill



January 1, 2020

Dear Fellow Alabamians:

Happy New Year 2020, and Happy 200th Birthday to our beloved state!

2019 was yet another productive year for the Secretary of State's Office. From Inauguration Day in January to the Democracy Tour in May to my trip to Israel in December, this issue is packed with information on our many accomplishments from the past year. We hope it proves beneficial to your knowledge of how the Secretary of State's Office strives to ensure that you, the people, remain our utmost priority, and we will do all we can to provide the help you need.

As always, please give our office a call if we can ever be of assistance to you. It is our pleasure to serve you.

Sincerely,

John H. Merrill
Secretary of State



Inauguration Day 2019



Secretary Merrill & Mrs. Cindy Merrill wave to the crowd during the Inaugural Parade.



Secretary Merrill takes his Oath of Office from State Representative Mike Jones with Mrs. Merrill, and their daughter, Allie Grace Merrill.

Alabama's historic, inaugural weekend kicked off at the beach with Governor Kay Ivey's Gulf Coast Inaugural Celebration at The Lodge in Gulf State Park on January 12th. After a brief welcome from Governor Ivey, Secretary John Merrill, and the other Constitutional Officers, the festivities commenced with a concert performed by platinum



Secretary Merrill shares a few words with the audience at the Governor's Inaugural kick-off celebration in Gulf Shores.

recording artist Neal McCoy. The inaugural celebration continued on Monday morning, January 14th, with an 8:15 a.m. prayer service at First Baptist Church in Montgomery, followed by the 10 a.m. swearing-in ceremony on the State Capitol's steps. Each Constitutional Officer had the opportunity to participate in the inaugural parade down Dexter Avenue, and the remainder of the afternoon was filled with various luncheons and photography sessions that were open to the public. Almost 1,000 guests attended Secretary Merrill's luncheon and photo session, which were held in the Archives & History Museum, and guests were also invited to stop by the Secretary of State's Executive Division in the Capitol for refreshments and souvenirs afterwards. Governor Ivey then hosted her *invitation-only* Inaugural Gala at the Montgomery Civic Center later that evening.



Left to Right: Secretary Merrill, Mrs. Merrill, Mrs. Betsy Brewer, and SOS Chief of Staff David Brewer at Governor Ivey's Inaugural Ball.



Secretary Merrill & Mrs. Merrill at Lieutenant Governor Will Ainsworth's Inaugural Luncheon.

"On January 19, 2015, I became Alabama's 53rd Secretary of State," Secretary Merrill stated. "For the last four years, it has been my honor to serve our people in this role! I was inaugurated for my second term, and I look forward to the next four years with the same energy and enthusiasm as before!"

International Adoption Day 2019

The 5th annual International Adoption Day celebration took place on Friday, January 25, 2019 at the State Capitol's Old House Chamber. The ceremony began with opening remarks from Secretary Merrill, which were followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Representative Allen Farley, who represents Jefferson and Shelby Counties. Pastor Chris Erwin from the Church of the Highlands in Montgomery returned again this year to lead the guests in prayer, and Josh Caldwell, another returning, honorary guest, who serves as the International Director of Lifeline Children's Services, shared information regarding his agency. Secretary Merrill was then pleased to introduce the Foti Family from Montgomery, who attended as special guests to share their beautiful testimony and adoption story. At the conclusion of the event, all in attendance were invited to the Secretary of State's conference room for a delectable variety of refreshments provided by Cecil McKinney, Cecilia Teel, and Jared McCrory of Children's Hope. The guests were also invited to attend a tour of the State Capitol Building or the Archives & History Museum.

"We had an outstanding fifth annual International Adoption Celebration!" Secretary Merrill stated. "We are always excited to recognize those families that have participated in international adoptions in order to make their families whole!"

The 6th annual International Adoption Day ceremony will be held in 2020.

Photography courtesy of Dionne Whetstone.



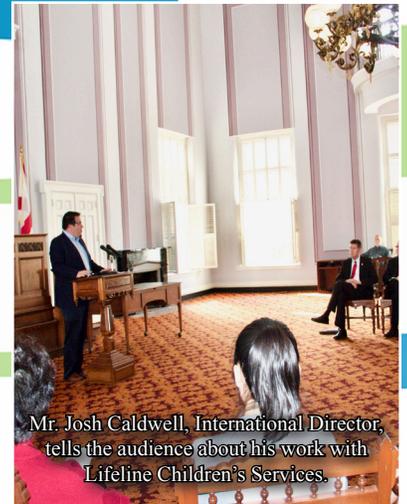
Mr. & Mrs. Garner from Etowah County are in the process of adopting a child from Africa.



The Foti Family & friend Jia, Shi Ping from Montgomery share their family's heartwarming adoption story.



Representative Allen Farley & Mrs. Muriel Farley show their support of the families.



Mr. Josh Caldwell, International Director, tells the audience about his work with Lifeline Children's Services.



Beautiful spread of refreshments provided by Cecil McKinney, Cecilia Teel, and Jared McCrory of Children's Hope.

Democracy Tour 2019

From May 9-11, 2019, Secretary Merrill and Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson (center, left photo) hosted a nonpartisan voting rights history tour in Alabama with 18 other Secretaries of State from across the nation.

This group of statewide election officials, which included nine Democrats and 11 Republicans, spent three days experiencing the history of the voting rights movement.

“This was a unique opportunity to bring a nationwide group of state chief election officers together to learn about both our sobering history and promising future here in Alabama and, by extension, the country,” Secretary Merrill said.

“Together this group of leaders is responsible for administering elections in 20 states across the country. This nonpartisan tour inspired us to come together while we learn about the hard-won struggle for voting rights that continues to impact our work in elections every day,” Secretary Benson stated.

The tour featured stops in Birmingham, Montgomery, and Selma, and participating Secretaries of State visited historical locations and museums that tell the story of the struggle for voting rights and the enactment of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. These locations included 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, and culminated in a bridge crossing on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma.

Throughout their time in Alabama, the Secretaries were joined by special guests whose lives were changed forever by the voting rights movement. From family members whose loved ones died in the course of the fight, to leaders of the movement such as Dr. Bernard Lafayette, visits to places and heritage sites throughout Alabama were informed by voices of those who are intimately part of this history. The Secretaries also heard from a handful of local elected officials and leaders in Alabama.

The National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) provided logistical and organizational support for this history tour in conjunction with the Alabama Department of State and the Michigan Department of State. This tour was made possible through the generous support of the Center for Secure and Modern Elections, the Southern Poverty Law Center, the Ford Foundation, and the Democracy Fund.



NASS Medallion Award Ceremonies 2019

“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

2019 Medallion Award Recipients:

**President of the Alabama Institute for the Deaf & Blind
Dr. John Mascia**

**Former Chair of the Alabama Republican Party
J. Elbert Peters**

**Alabama’s 48th Secretary of State
Billy Joe Camp**

**Alabama’s 47th Secretary of State
Perry Hand**

**Alabama Businessman / State & Community Leader
Elmer Harris**

**Alabama Department of Revenue’s Deputy Commissioner
Curtis Stewart**

**Montgomery’s 56th Mayor
Todd Strange**

**Corporate Paralegal with Maynard, Cooper, & Gale, P.C.
Melissa Childers**



Name: Dr. John Mascia
Date: January 28, 2019

- Graduated from Hofstra University in New York and the Pennsylvania College of Optometry's School of Audiology
- 17th President of AIDB in Talladega for the last six years
- Former supervisor & chief audiologist



Name: Elmer Harris
Date: September 18, 2019

- Retired from Alabama Power after 44 years of service
- Retired USAF Command Pilot and brigadier general in the Alabama Air National Guard
- Honorary Consul General of Japan
- Chairman and CEO of several financial and real estate LLCs



Name: J. Elbert Peters
Date: April 20, 2019

- Graduated from Auburn University in 1958 with a degree in Electrical Engineering
- Former State Chair of the Alabama Republican Party
- Founder, President, & Chairman of the Madison County Republican Men's Club in Huntsville



Name: Curtis Stewart
Date: October 18, 2019

- Deputy Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Revenue
- Former Director of the Tax Policy & Research Division
- Former manager in the private business advisory and governmental practices of KPMG in Atlanta, Georgia



Name: Billy Joe Camp
Date: May 1, 2019

- Executive Director of the Alabama Trial Lawyers' Association in 1979
- Commissioner & President of the Alabama Public Service Commission from January 1981 to 1983
- Alabama's 48th Secretary of State from 1991-1993
- Director of Alabama's Developmental Office in 1993



Name: Mayor Todd Strange
Date: November 8, 2019

- 56th Mayor of Montgomery for the last 10 years
- Former Director of the Alabama Department of Commerce
- Former Chairman of the Montgomery County Commission
- Former President, CEO, & Co-owner of Blount Strange Automotive Group



Name: Perry Hand
Date: June 25, 2019

- Alabama Senator for two terms
- Alabama Highway Director from 1991 to 1993
- Alabama's 47th Secretary of State from 1989 to 1991
- President, CEO, and Chairman of the Board at Volkert
- Chairman of the Business Council of Alabama



Name: Melissa Childers
Date: December 11, 2019

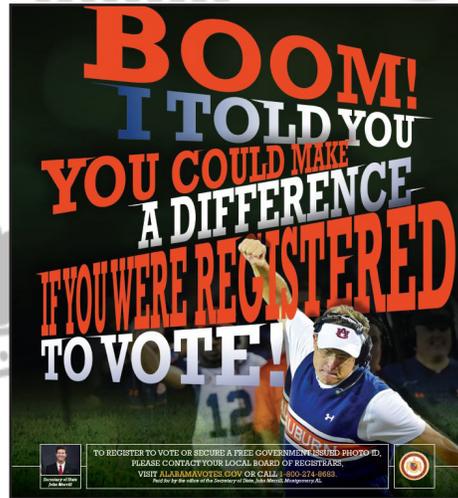
- Worked with SOS Office to implement changes to business forms in compliance with Act 2019-94
- Paralegal with Maynard, Cooper, & Gayle, P.C. in Birmingham
- Worked in the insurance industry for more than 13 years

Photo Voter ID & Voter Registration Promotions

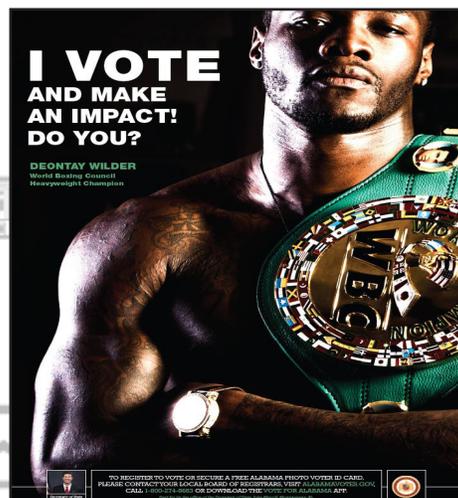
Since 2015, the Secretary of State's Office has produced two posters each year to promote voter registration and participation, as well as the option to obtain a photo voter ID card for those who do not have another form of valid identification to present at the polls. In 2019, the office requested the assistance of Jamey Johnson, a country music artist from Montgomery, and the Alabama Constitution Hall in Huntsville to portray William Wyatt Bibb, Alabama's first Governor. In previous years, the office has had the pleasure of working with a number of other renowned Alabamians, such as Alabama Head Football Coach Nick Saban and Auburn Head Football Coach Gus Malzahn (2015), former NBA star Charles Barkley and Heavyweight Boxing Champion Deontay Wilder (2016), Miss Alabama 2017 Jessica Procter and first female African American astronaut Dr. Mae Jemison (2017), and American Idol season 5 winner Taylor Hicks and local radio talk show hosts Rick & Bubba (2018). The posters are free to the public and can be found at the Board of Registrars Offices, the voter registration and photo ID mobile units, and at the SOS Office for visitors. In addition to the posters, each guest was also asked to record a commercial in support of the cause, which can be seen during local television programming and heard over the radio across the state.



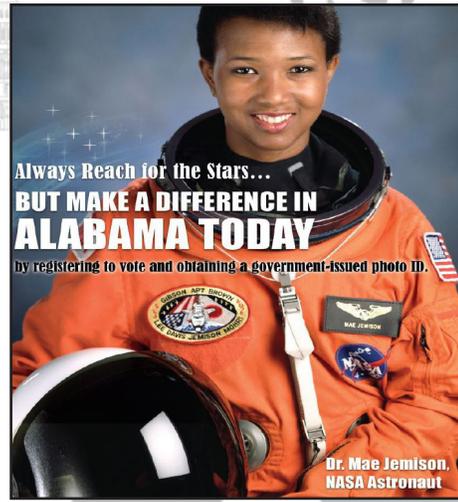
2
0
1
5



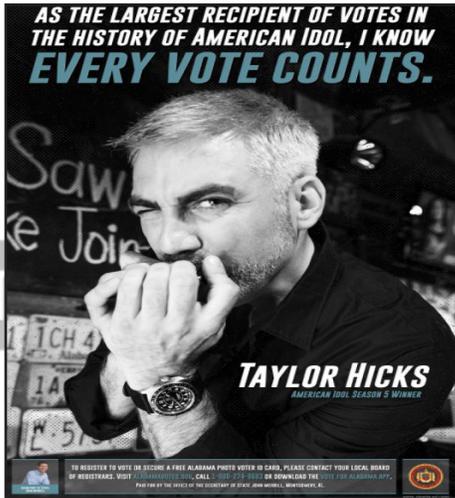
2
0
1
6



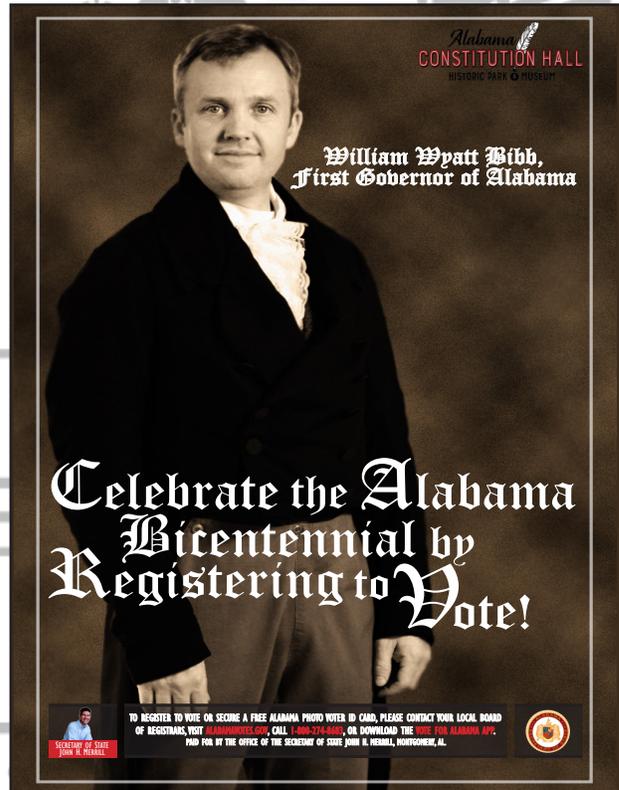
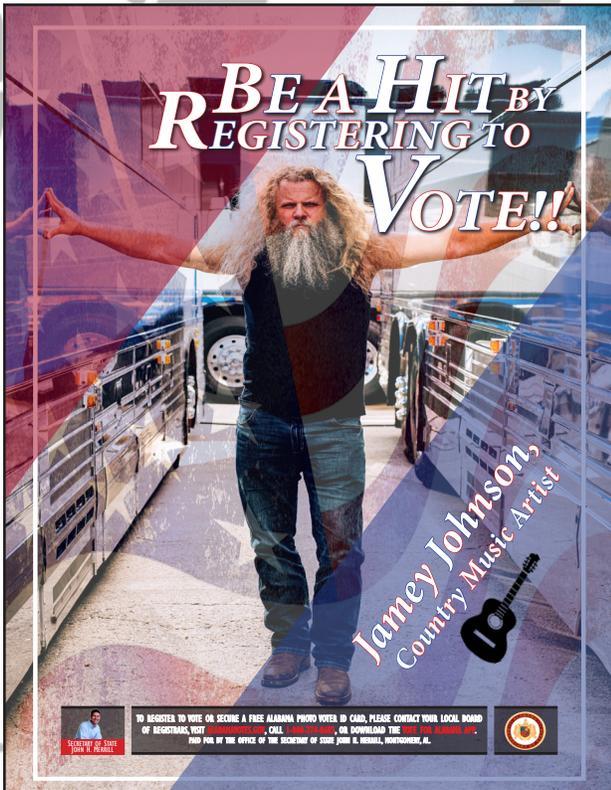
2
0
1
7



2
0
1
8



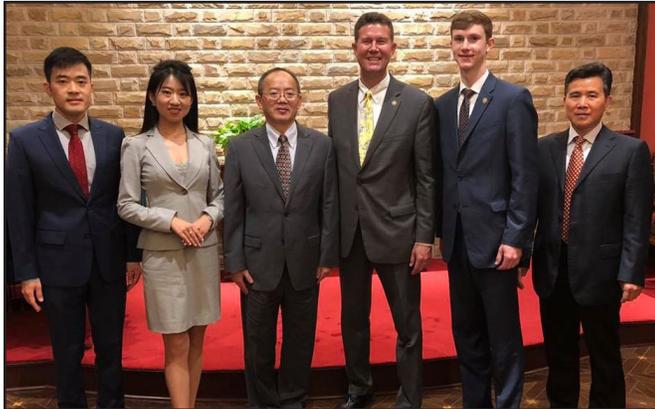
2
0
1
9



International Relations Trips



China



In mid-May of 2019, Secretary of State John H. Merrill, Deputy Chief of Staff and Press Secretary John Bennett, and translator Ying “Springna” Zhao (all pictured in center photo) journeyed across the globe to China in order to visit with those who have and wish to make economic investments in Alabama, as well as to interact with those who are responsible for international adoptions from China. The trip began with a Welcome Luncheon hosted by the China Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries at the Beijing office and followed with an interview by the China News Service. The group then met with the Ministry of Civil Affairs of the People’s Republic of China to discuss the issues pertaining to international adoption and ways to help remove as many barriers as possible for the adopting families. Afterwards, they met with the Honorable Zheng Zeguang in Oliver Hall, who serves as Vice Premier of the China Foreign Ministry, visited Innoway and the Innoway Innovation Park Center downtown, and attended the Symposium on Asia-USA Partnership Opportunities (SAUPO) VIP Dinner at the Pacific Hotel in Shanghai. Near the end of the trip, Secretary Merrill and his team visited Shanghai City Hall and met Deputy Secretary General Ms. Shang, who serves the Mayor of Shanghai, to discuss the consideration of additional investment in Alabama and the state’s desire to help Alabama businesses grow in China. Secretary Merrill later served as one of the speakers at SAUPO at the Renaissance Shanghai Yu Garden Hotel to discuss evaluating investment opportunities both domestically and internationally. The trip concluded with an exciting tour of the Golden Dragon Copper Tubing plant, which is the largest manufacturer of copper tubing in the world and has a facility in Pine Hill, Alabama. This is Secretary Merrill’s second trip to China since 2015.



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



Alabama's Bicentennial Celebration

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

200
ALABAMA
BICENTENNIAL

Constituent Services

2015-2019

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, 2019, the office consists of **40 employees**, excluding the Secretary of State. Since January 19, 2015, **42 employees have either resigned, transferred, retired, or have been released.**

~**Phased out the Personnel Division.** 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, 2019, **expenses were reduced by \$2,331,326.29.**

~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, and 2019 Secretary Merrill **visited all 67 counties** at least once to discuss voter registration and voter photo I.D. delivery.

~**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.

~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 2019, the office achieved 100% participation and raised \$2,060.04, which is 269.99% 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 Sessions, **11 bills were passed in 2016**, **2 bills** were passed in the 2017 Legislative Session, **1 bill** was passed in 2018, and **13 bills** were passed in 2019.

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, **1,408,088 people have registered to vote in Alabama, which sets the total to 3,550,398.**

~**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, Miss Alabama 2017 Jessica Procter, the first African American female astronaut Dr. Mae Jemison, American Idol season 5 winner Taylor Hicks, radio talk show stars Rick & Bubba Country, Music Artist Jamey Johnson, and Alabama's first Governor William Wyatt Bibb portrayed by a Constitution Village Actor** 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.

~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.

•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,

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

•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.

•Stopping the Spread of Misinformation

- ~In December 2019, Secretary Merrill met with representatives from Facebook and Twitter to ensure Alabama is prepared for the 2020 election cycle in the fight to stop the spread of misinformation. In 2017, the State of Alabama witnessed several attempts to mislead voters through the spread of misinformation on various social media platforms. Since 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, 2019*, 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 three 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 is *working with Alabama's counties to establish an "online filings system" for domestic entity filings. Currently, Baldwin, Elmore, Jackson, Montgomery, Tuscaloosa, Colbert, Morgan, and Madison 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), foreign for-profit corporations, foreign non-profit corporations, and foreign limited liability partnerships.

~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 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.

~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. The sixth ceremony will be held 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.

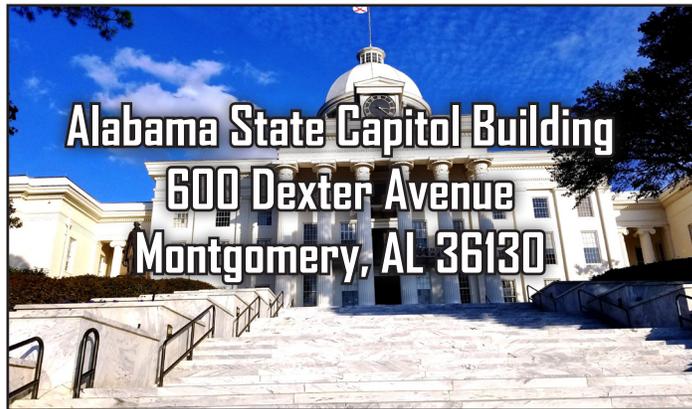
Alabama Athlete Agents Commission

•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



Alabama State Capitol Building
600 Dexter Avenue
Montgomery, AL 36130

Executive Division
Suite S-105
334-242-7200

Secretary John H. Merrill
334-242-7200
John.Merrill@sos.alabama.gov

David A.Z. Brewer, Deputy SOS & Chief of Staff
334-242-7207
David.Brewer@sos.alabama.gov

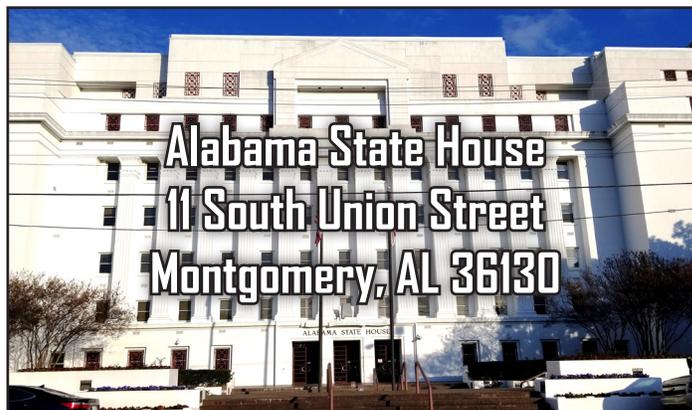
Karen Guthrie, Executive Assistant & Scheduler
334-353-2171
Karen.Guthrie@sos.alabama.gov

Finance Division
Suite E-205
334-353-2022

Taylor Freeman, Chief Financial Officer
334-353-2022
Taylor.Freeman@sos.alabama.gov

Elections Division
E-204, 206, 208, 210
334-242-7210

Clay Helms, Elections Director
334-353-7177
Clay.Helms@sos.alabama.gov



Alabama State House
11 South Union Street
Montgomery, AL 36130

Authentications & Trademarks / Government Support
Suite 224 / 226
334-242-5325 / 334-242-7224

Shemekwa Farrow, Division Director
334-242-7224
Shemekwa.Farrow@sos.alabama.gov



**Business Entities
Suite 580
334-242-5324**

Elaine Swearingin, Business Director
334-242-7221

Elaine.Swearingin@sos.alabama.gov

Lovetta Churchill, Domestic Entities Supervisor
334-353-1931

Lovetta.Churchill@sos.alabama.gov

Renae Barron, Foreign Entities Supervisor
334-242-5328

Renae.Barron@sos.alabama.gov

Stephanie Keithahn, Mail / Registry Supervisor
334-242-5913

Stephanie.Keithahn@sos.alabama.gov

**Uniform Commercial Code
Suite 580
334-353-0203**

Beth Hall, UCC Director
334-242-5970

Margaret.Hall@sos.alabama.gov

**Information Systems
Suite 580
334-242-7222**

Adam Alexander, Division Director
334-242-7536

Adam.Alexander@sos.alabama.gov

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



sos.alabama.gov



<https://www.youtube.com/user/alasecretaryofstate>



**<https://twitter.com/JohnHMerrill>
<https://twitter.com/alasecofstate>**



**<https://www.facebook.com/JohnMerrill/>
<https://www.facebook.com/alasecretaryofstate/>**

A Year in Photos 2019





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

Alabama
CONSTITUTION HALL
HISTORIC PARK & MUSEUM

William Wyatt Bibb,
First Governor of Alabama

Celebrate the Alabama
Bicentennial by
Registering to Vote!



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



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