

Quarterly Report

July 2019



Secretary Merrill's Second Visit to China



Democracy Tour 2019



NASS Medallion Award Ceremonies



Legislative Session 2019

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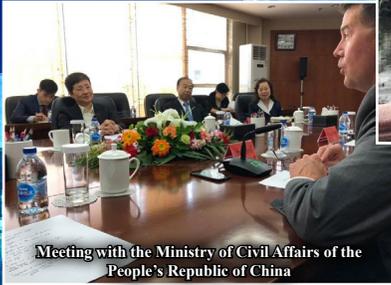
Meeting with Deputy Secretary General Ms. Shang



Meeting with the Honorable Zheng Zeguang,
Vice Premier of the China Foreign Ministry



John Bennett, Secretary Merrill, & Springna Zhao at the Shanghai Pearl Market



Meeting with the Ministry of Civil Affairs of the
People's Republic of China



Visiting the Innoway Innovation Park Center in
Downtown Beijing

In mid-May, 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 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 his first visit in 2015.

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 is 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. I hope this nonpartisan tour inspires 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 will be 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

Throughout each year, Secretary Merrill recognizes outstanding individuals with the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) Medallion Award in order to recognize the recipient's services to the people of Alabama. The following individuals received the NASS Medallion this past quarter.

J. Elbert Peters



Date of Recognition:
April 20, 2019

Basis for Selection:

- 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, which began in January 1985

Billy Joe Camp



Date of Recognition:
May 1, 2019

Basis for Selection:

- 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, where he helped secure the Mercedes project

Perry Hand



Date of Recognition:
June 25, 2019

Basis for Selection:

- Alabama Senator for two terms
- Alabama Highway Director from 1991 to 1993
- Alabama's 47th Secretary of State from 1989 to 1991
- President, Chief Executive Officer, and Chairman of the Board at Volkert
- Inducted into the State of Alabama Engineering Hall of Fame
- Chairman of the Business Council of Alabama

Legislative Session 2019

Here's a quick look at the 13 bills that the Secretary of State's Office passed in the 2019 Legislative Session.

SB301: Absentee Ballot Process

House Sponsor: Matt Fridy. Senate Sponsor: Rodger Smitherman. Act 2019-507.

This bill requires that proper identification be provided with an absentee ballot application; deletes the requirement that absentee election managers post the daily list of absentee ballot applications; adds circumstances under which voters may request an absentee ballot (being incarcerated or is a caregiver to a family member); allows for absentee applications and absentee ballots to be returned by commercial carriers.

HB227: Absentee Election Manager Compensation

House Sponsor: Bob Fincher. Senate Sponsor: Will Barfoot. Act 2019-415.

This bill allows for absentee election managers to work during the 55-day period prior to an election and the seven-day period following an election. The bill caps the total number of working days at 46.

HB48: Jessi's Law

House Sponsor: Will Dismukes. Senate Sponsor: Clyde Chambliss. Act 2019-512.

This bill establishes rape and incest as conditions under which parental rights may be terminated.

HB16: Municipal Registration Deadline Update

House Sponsor: Jim Hill. Senate Sponsor: Clyde Chambliss. Act 2019-358.

This bill changes the deadline to register to vote in municipal elections from ten days prior to the election to 14 days, which makes it consistent with all other elections.

SB5: Athlete Agent Law Update

House Sponsor: Chris Blackshear. Senate Sponsor: Gerald Allen. Act 2019-504.

This bill makes Alabama law consistent with NCAA bylaws by clarifying circumstances under which a certified agent may cover certain expenses for elite student athletes.

HB247: Runoff Bill

House Sponsor: Rhett Marques. Senate Sponsor: Dan Roberts. Act 2019-318.

This bill changes the runoff period from six weeks to four weeks following the primary; changes the primary from the first Tuesday in June to the fourth Tuesday in May (except in presidential elections); amends the timeline for certifying results to ensure elections continue to be conducted effectively and efficiently.

HB188: Publication of Acts of Legislature

House Sponsor: Matt Fridy. Senate Sponsor: Billy Beasley. Act 2019-414.

This bill allows for the Secretary of State to distribute copies of legislative acts electronically. However, entities that request a bound copy will still receive one. This bill will save approximately \$40,000 each year.

SB240: Student Ambassador Program

House Sponsor: Alan Baker. Senate Sponsor: Donnie Chesteen. Act 2019-476.

This bill allows probate judges to appoint up to two students in each precinct to serve as unpaid poll workers.

SB229: Chambers County Registrars Bill

House Sponsor: Bob Fincher. Senate Sponsor: Randy Price. Act 2019-439.

This bill extends the working days for the Chambers County Board of Registrars to 180 days.

HB174: Permanent Disability Absentee Process

House Sponsor: Victor Gaston. Senate Sponsor: Vivian Figures. Act 2019-359.

This bill allows voters who have a permanent disability which prevents them from attending the polls to apply for an absentee ballot on an annual basis, provided that a licensed physician provides verification that the voter is in fact unable to attend the polls.

HB250: Corporations Update

House Sponsor: Bill Poole. Senate Sponsor: Sam Givhan. Act 2019-94.

This bill revises Alabama Business Corporation Law to reflect the national standards set by the Model Business Corporation Act of 2016.

SB128: Ballot Selfie Bill

House Sponsor: Victor Gaston. Senate Sponsor: Chris Elliott. Act 2019-370.

This bill clarifies that it is unlawful to reveal the contents of another person's ballot, but voters may take a photo of their own ballot.

HB114: Athlete Agent Sunset

House Sponsor: Margie Wilcox. Act 2019-54.

This bill extends the Alabama Athlete Agents Commission until October 1, 2023.

Secretary Merrill's Quarterly Travels



**Meeting with Students from the Watts Neighborhood of Los Angeles, California
April 19, 2019**



**East Metro Area Crime Center in Oxford Ribbon Cutting
May 24, 2019**



**Visit with Members of Congress and their Staff as the Leader of the Alabama Delegation from the United States Global Leadership Coalition
June 18, 2019**



**Ceremony honoring Dr. C.O. Grinstead
June 23, 2019**

As a means to increase transparency and extend the services of the Secretary of State's Office to all Alabamians, Secretary Merrill's annual goal is to travel to each of Alabama's 67 counties at least once a year to speak to various groups of all ages, which includes but is not limited to fourth grade classes, graduation ceremonies, dinners, award presentations, and more.

The following list contains a select few of Secretary Merrill's visits from around and outside the state for the **April through June 2019** quarter.

- Attended the quarterly meeting of the Mobile Republican Executive Committee at Westminster Presbyterian Church. April 1, 2019
- Interviewed by Dale Jackson via telephone to discuss voter registration and participation in Alabama. April 2, 2019
- Interviewed by Alabama Public Radio via telephone to discuss the administrative calendar for the special election for Alabama House District 74. April 2, 2019
- Met with the 4th grade class from Griggs Elementary School from Mobile County during their visit to the Capitol. April 2, 2019
- Attended the Black Warrior Council Circle of Honor Luncheon in Tuscaloosa recognizing Senator Richard Shelby for his many contributions. April 5, 2019
- Attended The University of Alabama's 2019 spring football practice. April 5, 2019
- Attended an Alabama Bicentennial celebration in Northport. April 6, 2019
- Attended a luncheon featuring Anthony Scaramucci sponsored by The University of Alabama College Republicans at the Cypress Inn in Tuscaloosa. April 8, 2019
- Spoke to the members of Boy Scout Troop 351 at their Court of Honor ceremony at Huffman United Methodist Church in Jefferson County. April 8, 2019
- Spoke at Handley High School in Randolph County to discuss the responsibilities of the SOS Office. April 9, 2019
- Spoke to the members of the Hamilton Kiwanis Club in Marion County. April 15, 2019
- Spoke to a group from the Watts neighborhood in Los Angeles, California during their visit to the Capitol. April 19, 2019
- Attended the 21st annual crawfish boil at Premier Service Company in Tuscaloosa. April 19, 2019
- Spoke to the fourth grade students from Liberty Park Elementary School in Vestavia during their visit to the Capitol. May 7, 2019
- Spoke to the fourth grade students from Faucett-Vestavia Elementary School in Northport during their visit to the Capitol. May 7, 2019
- Spoke at the State of Alabama Fallen Officer Memorial Ceremony on the Capitol grounds in Montgomery. May 10, 2019
- Attended the Celebration of the Arts Awards Program at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival in Montgomery. May 22, 2019
- Spoke at the ribbon cutting and dedication ceremony of the East Metro Area Crime Center in Oxford. May 24, 2019
- Attended the going away party for Ying "Springna" Zhao at the Montgomery Country Club. May 30, 2019
- Visited the Heflin-Torbert Judicial Building for another Alabama Bicentennial event, which featured The Alabama Justice Exhibit for Alabama 200. June 12, 2019
- Served as the keynote speaker at the Denim and Diamonds Alzheimer's Fund-raiser in Foley. June 15, 2019
- Attended the annual meeting of the United States Global Leadership Coalition at the Grand Hyatt in Washington DC. June 16, 2019
- Attended the United States Global Leadership Coalition State Advisory Committee Leaders Welcome Breakfast to kick off the 2019 State Leaders Summit. June 17, 2019
- Attended the opening, afternoon, and closing session at the United States Global Leadership Coalition meeting in Washington, DC. June 17, 2019
- Led the Alabama delegation from the United States Global Leadership Coalition, visiting members of Congress and their staff about issues related to international relations. June 18, 2019
- Attended the annual Shelby County Republican Party dinner in Pelham. June 21, 2019
- Spoke at the funeral of Dorothy Barton Smith, who was an active member of the Tuscaloosa County Board of Education and the Alabama Farmers Federation Board. June 26, 2019

Quarterly Accomplishments

- As of **June 28, 2019**, **1,283,544** people have registered to vote since Secretary Merrill took office on **January 19, 2015**, which sets the total to a record-breaking **3,493,586** registered voters.
- Registration of **foreign limited liability partnerships** is now available online.
- Registration and formation of **domestic limited liability partnerships** are now available online.
- **Trademarks, service marks, and trade names** can now be renewed online.
- All SOS employees have completed the **annual ethics training** session, as required by Secretary Merrill.
- **13 bills** passed in the **2019 Legislative Session** (see page 4).
- The SOS Office certified the vendors who are allowed to provide **poll books** to counties and municipalities to enable a more efficient check-in process for voters on **Election Day**.



Office Contact Info.

Alabama State Capitol
600 Dexter Avenue
Montgomery, AL 36130

Executive

State Capitol
Suite S-105
334-242-7200

Elections

State Capitol
Second Floor
334-242-7210

Finance

State Capitol
Second Floor
334-353-2022

Alabama State House
11 South Union Street
Montgomery, AL 36130

Government Support / Authentications & Trademarks

State House
Rooms 224 & 226
334-242-7224 / 334-242-5325

RSA Plaza

770 Washington Avenue
Montgomery, AL 36104

Business Entities

RSA Plaza
Suite 580
334-242-5324

UCC

RSA Plaza
Suite 580
334-242-5970

Information Systems

RSA Plaza
Suite 580
334-242-7222

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Coming **October 2019!**