



Office of Senate President Pro Tempore Del Marsh  
Press Clips  
Friday, April 30, 2010

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**[Round Two: Central Alabama officials, commuters brace for winter storm's second act \(al.com\)](#)**

Though the first of two back-to-back bouts of wintry weather was gentler to metro Birmingham than areas to the north, transportation officials expect more widespread road impacts from the second shot.

Forecasts on Tuesday evening showed more ice and snow accumulations are likely beginning Wednesday afternoon through Thursday morning.

The Alabama Department of Transportation will reactivate its emergency call center at 6 a.m. Wednesday -- the second time in as many weeks.

ALDOT last opened the center during the Jan. 28 snowstorm and gave out road conditions and assistance to about 6,000 callers in a three-day period.

Callers can reach the center toll-free at 1-888-588-2848.

While the call center reopens in Montgomery, ALDOT road crews across ice-weary north and central Alabama are keeping watch through the night.

Though rain is predicted for Wednesday night, a winter storm warning remains in effect for much of central and northern Alabama.

ALDOT Third Division Engineer Brian Davis said since temperatures will be near freezing as rain falls, a skeleton crew will be kept on hand to start treating any problem areas.

ALDOT began treating roadways ahead of the storm as early as Sunday night with brine, sand and CMA, a material which can help melt ice.

Widespread overnight road treatment isn't planned. Davis said crews are trying to determine the best time on Wednesday to reapply treatments if needed.

"Salt brine is real good because it's such a hard paste that once you get it on there, it stays put," Davis said.

As long as there is less than a quarter-inch of rain, roads and bridges don't risk losing too much of the materials already in place.

Wednesday morning, Davis urged commuters to keep an eye on weather forecasts and check road conditions before deciding whether to leave home.

Standing by

Though the Birmingham Department of Public Works did not receive any ice calls Tuesday and trash and brush routes remained on schedule.

The city's sand trucks are on standby and deployed around the city to go into use when needed, department Director Stephen Fancher said.

Police and fire departments will remain at full staffing levels through the winter storm warning period and are assisting the Jefferson County Emergency Management Agency's command center, officials said.

The Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority resumed several MAX transit routes Tuesday afternoon that had been suspended due to the weather.

A modified fixed-route schedule featuring 11 of the transit authority's routes will run Wednesday. BJCTA continues to monitor street conditions, Executive Director Ann August said. Officials will decide mid-morning Wednesday whether to adjust the routes.

Birmingham-Shuttlesworth International Airport ran normal operations Tuesday. Crews are monitoring the airport's runways and approaching weather conditions, and preparing equipment and supplies to deal with any icing, spokeswoman Toni Herrera-Bast said.

Bast said airlines make decisions to cancel or delay flights. Travelers should check with their airlines.

Gov. Robert Bentley said late Tuesday that no weather-related deaths had been reported across Alabama.

Erring with caution

Steady rainfall fell Monday night across metro Birmingham as temperatures slid toward the freezing point. By Tuesday morning, only isolated patches of ice were reported in the immediate metro area before temperatures rose during the day.

That left a largely wet drive for commuters along highways with far fewer drivers than a normal Tuesday morning.

It was a far different situation not too far north of Birmingham, where snow, sleet and ice socked Blount, Cullman and Walker counties and areas north and west.

A set of jackknifed 18-wheelers idled Interstate 65 northbound traffic through Blount and Cullman counties for several hours, and snow contributed to other problems on secondary roads.

Closer to Birmingham, drivers had far more flexible decisions to make. Melinda Howard left 30 minutes later than normal. Her drive along U.S. 280 from Harpersville to Hoover was uneventful. Howard said she wasn't disappointed in forecasters' warnings.

"I can use my own judgement," Howard said. "If I know roads in Shelby County are iced over, I'm not going to drive on them."

Erring on the side of caution and waiting about an hour to leave home was something Payton Ely said sliced in half his usual 40-minute rush-hour drive from Homewood to Tarrant. The lack of school traffic also helped, he said.

Ely said he plans to take the same wait-and-see approach Wednesday and Thursday mornings.

"I'm more worried about getting back and getting caught in the traffic jam like we had a few weeks ago, and taking seven hours to get home," Ely said, referring to the Jan. 28 snowstorm that stranded thousands of people away from their homes and families.

Howard said she thinks the Jan. 28 storm has had a lasting impact on how Alabama drivers are approaching the current storm.

"That will live with us forever, I believe," Howard said. "Once I hear 'ice' and I see it, I will leave immediately."

A winter storm warning remains in effect for most of central and northern Alabama through Thursday.

## **[Ala. governor: Guard wreckers already being used \(AP\)](#)**

Gov. Robert Bentley says two National Guard wreckers have been dispatched to Interstate 65 near Cullman to help clear jackknifed 18-wheelers that blocked northbound traffic.

The governor says one lesson learned from the Jan. 28 ice storm was to get National Guard wreckers organized early to pull stalled vehicles to the side of the road until the weather clears and the owners can reclaim them.

Alabama Department of Transportation spokesman Tony Harris says the state has brought in contractor crews to assist with snow removal across north Alabama counties.

The state is bracing for another shot of winter weather Tuesday night and Wednesday that could dump even more snow and ice than the first round of precipitation.

## **[Tracking the 2014 session: Senate passes Smoke-Free Air Act \(al.com\)](#)**

MONTGOMERY, Alabama --- Smokers could not light up in public places and workplaces, with some exceptions, under a bill that cleared the Alabama Senate on Tuesday.

Sen. Vivian Figures, D-Mobile, has tried for years to pass legislation to restrict smoking in public because of the dangers of second-hand smoke. Her bill, SB 168, is called the Smoke-Free Air Act.

The Senate approved it by vote of 21-8, after adding amendments by Sen. Bill Holtzclaw, R-Madison. Figures opposed his amendment to exempt private clubs. Her bill exempted existing private clubs under a grandfather clause, but not those started after the law takes effect.

The bill goes to the House.

Today was the 12th meeting day of the legislative session, which can have up to 30 meeting days.

What they did:

The House:

-- Passed HB 155 by Rep. Mike Hill, R-Columbiana, to end the Public Service Commission's jurisdiction over consumer complaints about telecommunications. Goes to Senate.

-- Passed HB 6 by Rep. Becky Nordgen, R-Gadsden, to say that doctors and dentists could not be required to accept any public or private health insurance. Goes to Senate.

-- Passed HB 254 by Rep. Ron Johnson, R-Sylacauga, to regulate tanning facilities and limit the use of ultraviolet tanning beds by teens.

Senate:

-- Finished periodic reviews of state agencies, called sunset bills.

-- Passed SB 240 by Sen. Roger Bedford, D-Russellville, to make it a crime to use drones to harass hunters and fishermen.

Coming up:

-- A House committee will hold a public hearing on HB 281, the "Alabama Student Religious Liberty Act," which says, in part, that students can express their religious beliefs in academic work.

-- A House committee will hold public hearings on HB 145 and HB 406, which would lower the interest rates allowed on payday loans and car title loans.

-- A Senate committee will hold a public hearing on a SB 191, which would amend the Open Meetings Act to prohibit public boards from meeting in small groups or pairs to avoid notifying the public.

The Senate convenes at 3 p.m. Wednesday, and the House at 3:30 p.m.

## **[No joke: Alabama Senate passes bill to protect hunters from harassment by drones \(al.com\)](#)**

Sen. Roger Bedford said he thought it was a joke when he first heard that drones had been used to harass hunters.

"I was at a legislative conference with some fellow legislators that hunt and fish like I do," said Bedford, a Democrat from Russellville. "It came up in a conversation that one of the states had been having problems with this. At first I thought they were kidding.

“But animal rights activist groups are using this to disrupt people who are legally and ethically hunting and fishing and that’s just wrong. And as a lifelong hunter, I don’t want to see that happening in Alabama. “

The Alabama Senate today passed SB 240 by Bedford, which would make it a misdemeanor to intentionally use a drone to harass someone who is legally hunting or fishing.

The bill defines a drone as any aerial vehicle without a human operator.

Bedford said he thought about eight other states had passed similar laws. He said he had not heard of any Alabama hunters being harassed by drones.

“But I think it’s just a matter of time if we don’t get something enacted into the law,” the veteran lawmaker said.

Bedford said the law was narrowly written so that it would not affect the use of drones for other purposes, such as showing real estate or inspecting power lines.

“This is just a classic case of the law catching up with technology,” Bedford said. “As these drones have become more and more sophisticated you can operate them further and further away.”

## **Alabama House limits state’s power over health insurance requirements (Anniston Star)**

by Tim Lockette

MONTGOMERY — The Alabama House of Representatives voted Tuesday to prevent the state from requiring doctors and other medical professionals to accept Medicaid — or any other specific type of insurance — to keep their licenses.

The bill’s sponsor, Rep. Becky Nordgren, R-Gadsden, said the bill would protect doctors from being forced into accepting insurance they can’t afford to take. She also said it would protect the licensing process, which she said is based on the quality of applicants, not other considerations.

“We want to maintain that superiority,” she said.

Critics of the proposal questioned the need for Nordgren's bill — doctors are already free to turn patients away based on the insurer they use — and said the main goal of the bill was to protect a doctor's right to reject Medicaid patients.

"You're just turning your back onto the sick," said Rep. Pebblin Warren, D-Tuskegee.

Nordgren, who works in the medical supply industry, has proposed a handful of bills this year that would allow doctors to opt out of some practices. The House passed a bill by Nordgren that would allow medical providers to refuse to participate in abortion and some other reproduction-related procedures. Another of her bills, which has yet to get a vote in the House, would give health care providers the option of accepting payment from Medicaid in the form of a tax credit.

Critics of the bill asked if anyone in the state was even considering an effort to require doctors to take Medicaid or any other type of insurance. Nordgren responded that Massachusetts had set up just such a rule, and she wanted to prevent the imposition of a similar rule here.

"There's no need for this now, there's nothing going on," Warren replied. "You're the only one in the state who's making this a situation of urgency."

Rep. Elaine Beech, D-Chatom, who is a pharmacist, thanked Nordgren for introducing the bill. Beech said pharmacists often see customers whose insurance plans don't pay enough to allow the pharmacist to see a profit.

"You have to look out for your family," she said.

The bill passed the House 77-16.

Etowah County coroner Michael Gladden, who is running against Nordgren as a Democrat, said he wishes lawmakers had looked deeper at the problems that might make doctors reluctant to accept Medicaid.

"I would like to see more focus on fixing the part of Medicaid that's not acceptable to physicians," he said. "Then it's a win for the patient and a win for the doctor."

In other business Tuesday, the House:

— Passed 92-2 a bill that would ban children under the age of 15 from using tanning beds. Fifteen-year-olds would need parental permission and a parent present, while 16- and 17-year-olds would require only parental permission.



— Passed two bills proposed by Rep. Koven L. Brown, R-Jacksonville, related to funeral services. One, which passed 90-1, would clarify some of the state’s wording on licensing of funeral directors. The other, passed 83-2, would require funeral directors to attend continuing education classes.

## **Alabama House musters a quorum with 57 members; passes tanning bill (al.com)**

MONTGOMERY, Alabama --- The snow and ice storm two weeks ago cancelled two scheduled meeting days in the Alabama House of Representatives, but today’s bad weather did not keep as many lawmakers away.

Fifty-seven members answered roll today shortly after the scheduled time of 1 p.m. There are 104 House members, and a minimum of 53 are needed to conduct business.

The House had only 40 members in attendance two weeks ago.

Shortly after convening today, the House passed a bill to regulate tanning facilities and place restrictions on teens using the ultraviolet tanning beds.

The bill says that 16- and 17-year-olds need written permission from a parent to use ultraviolet tanning beds. Fifteen-year-olds would need written permission and parent present. Those 14 and under could not use the tanning beds unless prescribed by a doctor for a skin condition.

The bill, HB 254 by Rep. Ron Johnson, R-Sylacauga, moves to the Senate.

The House is also expected to debate a bill to discontinue the Public Service Commission’s handling of complaints about telephone service.

The Senate meets at 2 p.m. and is expected to handle a set of noncontroversial bills.

## **Summary of action in Alabama Legislature (AP)**

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — A summary of action in the Alabama Legislature on Tuesday, the 12th meeting day of the regular session:

HOUSE:

- Approved a bill to require teens to get parental consent to use a tanning bed. Goes to Senate.
- Approved a bill that related to regulations for funeral parlors. Goes to Senate.

SENATE:

- Approved a bill to ban smoking in many public places and businesses. Goes to House.
- Approved a bill to make it a misdemeanor to intentionally use a drone to harass someone hunting or fishing legally. Goes to House.
- Completed passing bills to extend the life of several state agencies, including the Alabama Surface Mining Commission and Alabama Construction Recruitment Institute. Go to House.

AGENDA:

- Senate Finance and Taxation-Education Committee meets at 10:30 a.m. in room 727 of the Statehouse to consider a bill reducing estimated state income tax payments by small businesses.
- Senate Judiciary Committee meets at 1 p.m. Wednesday in room 325 to consider revisions to the Open Meetings Act.
- House Financial Services Committee meets at 9 a.m. in room 428 to consider new regulations for payday lenders.
- House Ways and Means-Education Committee meets at 9 a.m. in room 617 to consider tax credits for dual enrollment scholarships.
- House Constitution, Campaigns and Elections Committee meets at 9:15 a.m. in room 123 to consider term limits for legislators.
- Senate meets at 3 p.m. Wednesday.
- House meets at 3:30 p.m. Wednesday.

## **Common Core takes center stage in local Senate race (Anniston Star)**

by Tim Lockette

MONTGOMERY – Oxford resident Steven Guede thinks the Common Core should be a core issue in Alabama’s 2014 elections.

“This is exactly what we do not need,” said Guede, an aerospace technician from Oxford. “We do not need a top-down, authoritarian approach to education.”

Guede has long been an organizer for the local branch of Rainy Day Patriots, a tea party group. And he has long been a critic of the Common Core State Standards, a multi-state set of academic standards that served as a model for Alabama's academic standards for K-12 schools. Last week, he qualified for a run against one of the most powerful figures in the state Senate – President Pro Tem Del Marsh, R-Anniston – as a challenger for the Republican nomination in Senate District 11. The winner of that race will face Anniston lawyer Taylor Stewart, a Democrat, in the general election.

Guede's entry into the race may mark a shift for anti-Common-Core activists, who have been a regular presence at state school board meetings and legislative hearings, but have fielded few candidates for office.

Common Core was created by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. Proponents say the earlier standards, created on a state-by-state basis, created confusion when students transferred from state to state, and left students in some states less prepared for work and college. Critics of Common Core, citing the Obama administration's support for adoption of the standards, see them as a federal intrusion on state control of schools.

Marsh, the incumbent, has never believed there was clear evidence that Common Core is a federal plot.

"I can't see it," he said. "I've had people show me documents, federal documents that supposedly prove that this was passed at the federal level. I just can't connect the dots."

Marsh ran afoul of Common Core critics late last year when he worked to put a hold on a bill that would have banned Common Core in Alabama. At the time, he said the issue was too complicated for the hectic general session of the Legislature, and needed to be studied after the session. Since then, Marsh has said that the issue should be dealt with in a dedicated special session, if it's handled by the Legislature at all.

"I strongly believe this is a matter for the state school board," Marsh said.

He said Guede should consider a run for the school board if he wants to change the standards.

The Alabama State Board of Education has debated the issue multiple times since it originally passed Common Core-based standards, known as the College and Career-Ready Standards, in 2010. The board has voted to rescind its original agreement with the other Common Core states and replace it with a statement that asserts Alabama has control over the standards.

Guede said a full repeal of Common Core is what is needed. And he said Marsh's indifference to the anti-Common-Core cause is a sign that Marsh, and Montgomery, are out of touch with Alabama.

"Only the so-called smart people in Montgomery, who know what's right for all of us, get to have a say," he said.

Marsh said he's talked to teachers about the standards.

"The bulk of the educators I've talked to are happy with it," he said.

Stewart, the Democrat in the race, said Monday that he's still consulting with teachers and other education experts to formulate a detailed position on Common Core, though he said the standards "have some issues."

"I know Alabama teachers don't like to be told how to run their classrooms, but the state board will decide," he said. Asked if that meant the issue should be settled by the Board of Education, Stewart declined to rule out settling the matter in the Legislature.

Stewart has more time to stake out a position than either Marsh or Guede. The Republican primary is in June, and the general election – when Stewart will face the winner of that battle – is in November.

So far, Marsh has a sizable campaign-finance lead over his opponents, with around \$200,000 in his campaign coffers. Guede and Stewart say they have just started to raise money, and have not yet filed campaign finance reports.

Guede said he was less concerned with raising a lot of money than with raising money from grassroots supporters.

"I'd rather have \$5 each from 100 people than \$5,000 from one person who thinks I owe him something," he said.

## **[Mary Scott Hunter calls for 'truce' in Common Core fight on Alabama school board \(al.com\)](#)**

Mary Scott Hunter says it's time for the members of the Alabama state school board to call a truce and stop fighting over Common Core.

"Both sides of this debate can claim victories," said Hunter in a recent interview with AL.com.

"My opinion, we need to declare a truce on this and move on to other important things."

But the answer from fellow GOP officials is clear. The battle will continue.

"We haven't done anything significant," said board member Betty Peters this week. "We changed the name (from Common Core), but we haven't changed any significant content."

Hunter, the Republican board member for northeast Alabama, said the state board has taken steps to distance itself from the creators of Common Core.

Hunter pointed out the state school board in November rescinded the memorandum of agreement with the authors of the national standards. Last month the state board voted to remove any link to the list of national exemplars, the so-called "de facto national reading list" opposed by critics.

But opponents of Common Core voted against the efforts to cut ties.

"It's misleading," said Peters, who represents Dothan and southeast Alabama.

She compared the recent board votes to renegotiating the terms of an engagement after you've already been married.

We've been giving parents a false sense of security that (their children are) ready to go, and they're not.

Alabama College and Career Readiness Standards contain 100 percent of the national Common Core standards. And Peters said many of the standards are grade inappropriate.

Peters said removing a link to the list containing suggested reading materials doesn't forbid the use of those books. So she voted against it last month. "I do not want to confuse the public."

"If those books that I found offensive are still allowed for the local system to use then we have a problem," said Peters. She mentioned *The Bluest Eye*, *In the Time of Butterflies*, *Dreaming In Cuban* and *Things Fall Apart*.

"These have been considered controversial outside of the Bible Belt," said Peters. "I would think we should have a review of them."

But Hunter said business-minded Republicans demand that Alabama raise standards.

"I agree with Mary Scott," said Dr. Charles Elliott of Decatur, also a Republican member of the board. He said the Common Core debate has distracted his party from taking on other important issues, such as high infant mortality rates.

"I'm proud to be a Republican, but my party is so worried about listening to the voices on the Common Core," he said on Tuesday. "The same misconceptions, fears haven't changed in three years."

Elliott acknowledged recent criticism about students being discouraged by mediocre marks under new, more rigorous academic standards.

"We're not giving out as many As," he said. "We've been giving parents a false sense of security that (their children are) ready to go, and they're not."

He said Alabama had set the bar too low. "We're going to keep the Common Core standards because we are finally raising the bar," said Elliott.

charles\_elliott.JPG

Alabama State Board of Education President Charles Elliott. (File photo/Alabama Media Group)

"It's not the standards per se," said Peters, who said some of the wording and formats are confusing to students. She said good students are being told they are not doing an adequate job and that's counterproductive.

Republican board member Tracy Roberts in an email this week said she agreed with Hunter that the board has taken adequate steps to address concerns. Roberts also mentioned the board has taken steps to protect student information.

Hunter, who has been censured by the Madison County GOP for her support of Common Core, said she understood the concerns about student data.

She said she also understood concerns about the list of exemplars, because that list was not vetted by Alabama educators or committees. "It was actually a point where I thought the opponents have a valid point."

She said she assumed a step away from Common Core would win over Peters and Stephanie Bell, both of whom have opposed Common Core. "I think these votes are going to go forward and it's going to be unanimous and it's not."

"I don't understand what they want," said Hunter, who has repeatedly said flat-out repeal of Common Core would weaken Alabama schools.

Ella Bell, president pro tem of the state school board and a Democrat who represents Montgomery and many of the Black Belt counties, said she welcomes the higher standards because something has to change to improve public schooling in her district.

"I'm willing to try anything that has the stamped approval of learned Alabama educators," said Bell.

Yet it's early and the jury is still out on Common Core.

In his column in this week, Alabama's top teacher lobbyist, Dr. Henry Mabry, also raises concerns. Hardly an arch conservative, Mabry instead argues that teachers aren't being given adequate training or time to develop new methods to meet new standards.

Mabry, executive secretary of the Alabama Education Association, argues teachers shouldn't be threatened or punished for questioning the removal of proven teaching methods in favor of the latest strategy.

"We saw how No Child Left Behind was not the elixir after it was showcased as the be-all and end-all for public education," wrote Mabry in the AEA Journal, "and if the Common Core Initiative concerns are not addressed then it will be doomed just like NCLB."

## **[Gov. Robert Bentley open to restoration of former prisoners' voting rights \(AP\)](#)**

MONTGOMERY, Alabama — Alabama's governor says he's always believed someone should get their voting rights restored after serving their full sentences.

Gov. Robert Bentley reacted Tuesday to U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder calling on Alabama and 10 other states to do a better job of restoring voting rights to ex-felons.

Bentley says he's willing to look at a reasonable request for restoration of voting rights for people who are trying to become productive citizens again.

In Alabama, people convicted of felonies, except driving under the influence and drug possession, lose voting rights.

Most can apply to the state parole board to get their voting rights restored after finishing their prison sentences and probation, and paying fines and restitution. Some violent crimes require ex-felons to apply to the parole board for a pardon first.

## **McCrary retiring from Alabama Power, Crosswhite named new CEO (al.com)**

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama – Charles McCrary is retiring as chief executive of Alabama Power Co. after nearly 13 years at the helm, the company's board of directors said today.

Mark A. Crosswhite, 51, will become Alabama Power's new president and CEO March 1. Crosswhite returns to Alabama Power from Southern Company, Alabama Power's parent, where he served as chief operating officer.

McCrary not only has led the power company through some of its greatest natural-disaster challenges, but has been an active leader in a number of civic and business organizations. He took an atypical step into the spotlight and created a controversy when he publicly challenged Birmingham area leadership on its lack of unity and inability to accomplish things other Southeastern and Alabama cities were getting done in March 2006.

When Hurricane Ivan caused the largest rash of power outages in Alabama Power history, McCrary led the company as it worked with its crews and those from other states to get electricity restored. He would do so again during Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and the April 2011 tornadoes that ravaged the state. It was McCrary who led the company to institute a new plan to start informing areas of the state when they could expect to have their power restored.

Although his position as the head of one of Alabama's largest and most influential companies made him a sought-after participant in numerous events and activities, McCrary also sought to be involved in certain charities and occasions he personally felt strongly about.

But it was a speech to the Kiwanis Club of Birmingham in March 2006 that signaled McCrary was looking to do more than glad-hand at black-tie dinners and was willing to use his position to help bring about significant change in the Magic City.



"There will be a far smaller Birmingham to lead unless all of us take action," McCrary said in the speech.

He questioned the leadership of the different municipalities and counties in the metro area for not working together and seeming to be more interested in who gets credit for something than focusing on the greater good for the metro area. He also put a share of the blame on the business community for not stepping forward to bring about the change.

Although his comments initially drew audible gasps and some visible signs of shock at the time for their directness, McCrary's speech earned a standing ovation.

His remarks are credited with helping bring about the merger of the Birmingham Metropolitan Development Board, the Birmingham Regional Chamber of Commerce and Region 2020 to create the Birmingham Business Alliance. He played an active role in the merger team and continued to take on major positions within the BBA.

McCrary's own work with the BBA, the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama and the Alabama Department of Commerce has been significant and Alabama Power's own economic development office has been a key player in many of the state's biggest economic development victories. He served on the BBA's search committee to find a new CEO and its implementation team to put its "Blueprint Birmingham" five-year strategic plan into action.

Gov. Robert Bentley tapped McCrary to lead his transition team when he took office.

While the spotlight is not the electric apparatus he covets, McCrary does have a personal fascination with old radios and jukeboxes. He has several of each in his home and can often be found tinkering with their inner workings.

McCrary will now have more time for such leisurely pursuits in retirement while Crosswhite fills the shoes McCrary has left at the power company. Shouldering responsibility is nothing new for Crosswhite.

In his last position at Southern Company, Crosswhite oversaw operations that include generation, transmission, engineering and construction services, system planning, research and environmental affairs, fleet operations, and trading. He also had responsibility over wholesale energy providers Southern Power and Southern Wholesale Energy.

"It is an honor to rejoin the ranks of the 6,700 employees of Alabama Power who, for more than a century, have been dedicated to serving communities across our state," Crosswhite said.

Crosswhite first joined Southern Company in 2004 as senior vice president and general counsel for Southern Company Generation. Prior to joining Southern Company, he was a partner in the Birmingham law firm of Balch & Bingham, where he practiced in the Energy Section for 17 years.

Crosswhite is very familiar with Alabama Power and Birmingham.

Crosswhite first joined Alabama Power in 2006 as senior vice president and counsel, where he oversaw the company's legal matters. In 2008, he was named executive vice president for external affairs at Alabama Power, where he directed regulatory affairs, economic and community development, public relations, environmental affairs, and governmental affairs.

He also has experience leading a Southern Company state subsidiary, having served as CEO of Florida-based Gulf Power from 2010 until 2012.

A native of Decatur, Crosswhite's family has deep roots in Alabama, dating to the early 19th century. He received a bachelor's degree in 1984 from the University of Alabama in Huntsville and a J.D. degree in 1987 from the University of Alabama School of Law.

Crosswhite serves on several civic and nonprofit boards, including the executive committee of the Birmingham Business Alliance, and the boards of directors for the University of Alabama Law School Foundation and the Virginia Samford Theatre. He is vice chair of the Electricity Committee of the Section of Public Utility, Communications and Transportation Law of the American Bar Association, a member of the Edison Electric Institute Legal Committee, and a graduate of Leadership Alabama.

Crosswhite and his wife, Jane Emily, have two sons.

## **[Electronic Alabama tax returns seek new info \(AP\)](#)**

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — Alabama taxpayers who are filing their state tax returns electronically are supposed to supply new information.

The state Department of Revenue says those filing Forms 40, 40-A and 40 NR should include their driver's license number or non-driver's license number and their date of birth. State Revenue

Commissioner Julie Magee says the additional information is for protection against identity theft and fraudulent tax returns. She says the information can be validated quickly and it will not affect the normal processing of a tax return.

A spokesman for the Internal Revenue Service says driver's license numbers are not required on federal income tax returns. Instead, the IRS assigns a special personal identification number to victims of identity theft to provide security on their next returns.

## **[Alabama lawmakers blast latest Obamacare delay: 'No question this law is just not working' \(al.com\)](#)**

Alabama lawmakers said Obamacare's latest delay - this one involving small businesses - is another example of failure in the president's healthcare initiative.

The White House announced Monday it would delay another provision of the Affordable Care Act, pushing back the deadline for companies that employ between 50 and 100 full-time workers to provide health coverage from 2015 to 2016.

Companies with fewer than 50 full-time workers are exempt from the ACA. Those with 100 or more full-time workers must still offer benefits to at least 70 percent of staff by 2015 and expand that to 95 percent of employees by 2016.

Any business wanting an exemption must certify it had not reduced its workforce to quality for the one-year delay.

Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Saks, said the delay is just another example of problems associated with system known as "Obamacare."

"Last week it was the Congressional Budget Office report which said Obamacare would push 2.5 million workers over the next decade out of the workforce. This week the Obama administration is delaying a part of the employer mandate for a second year, because they know the law will hurt working families and our job creators," Rogers said.

The Obama administration announced last summer it was delaying the employer mandate that required companies with more than 50 full-time workers to offer insurance. That provision was supposed to go into effect this year but was moved back to 2015.

"I believe these two incidents are just further proof that this law is a failure and call on President Obama to work with Congress to repeal this deeply flawed law," Rogers said.

Rep. Bradley Byrne, R-Fairhope, said the economic impact of Obamacare isn't the only problem with the plan.

"Millions of American families are experiencing dropped coverage, skyrocketing premiums, and ill-fitting plans, there is no question this law is just not working," he said. "Now, the administration has admitted as such, pushing back the employer mandate requirement for small businesses by another year because they know this law is devastating to our economy and American small businesses.

Byrne, who won his Congressional seat in December, said his first legislative act was to co-sponsor a conservative repeal-and-replace bill that would work through existing markets to provide access to healthcare and coverage.

"The president has seen the numbers - he knows this law is broken. I call on him to do what is right for the American people and work with us to find market-based solutions to our healthcare problem," he said.

## **[House passes 'clean' debt-ceiling bill, ending two-week showdown \(Washington Post\)](#)**

By Paul Kane, Robert Costa and Ed O'Keefe, Published: February 11

The House approved a year-long suspension of the nation's debt limit Tuesday in a vote that left Republicans once again ceding control to Democrats after a collapse in support for an earlier proposal advanced by Speaker John A. Boehner (R-Ohio).

In a narrow vote, 221 to 201, just 28 Republicans joined nearly all Democrats to approve a "clean" extension of the government's borrowing authority — one without strings attached — sending the measure to the Senate for a final vote, probably this week.

The legislation, which Senate Majority Leader Harry M. Reid (D-Nev.) vowed to pass and President Obama said he would sign, would eliminate any chance of default on \$17.2 trillion in debt — and the financial havoc that would ensue — until March 2015.

The Republican surrender probably ended a three-year war by the House GOP against what had been an obscure procedural maneuver to ensure that the nation's past bills were paid on time. In early 2011, after claiming the majority, Republicans seized on the debt ceiling as leverage from which they could gain major concessions from Obama.

Twice they were able to do so, but Republicans undercut their position in October when they shut down the government and caused a national backlash. At the time, they also approved a temporary suspension of the debt ceiling, with vows to extract something from Obama this month. But with the political fallout from the impasse fresh in their minds, there was no desire among House Republicans to force another showdown.

Tuesday's House vote marked the latest rebuke to Boehner from the conservative faction of his GOP caucus, which opposed several proposals his leadership team had presented as a way to win Republican votes. His last offer, to link the debt-ceiling increase to a popular proposal to restore cuts to some military pensions, was soundly rejected by rank-and-file Republicans.

The speaker conceded defeat at a morning huddle of his caucus, joking about how no one clapped after he saved them from having to support a debt-limit increase, according to people at the meeting.

At a news conference afterward, Boehner broke into a tune from "Song of the South" to try to remain upbeat. "Zip-a-dee-doo-dah, zip-a-dee-ay," he sang.

Despite the setback, Boehner's leadership team was able to move past what could have been another ill-fated fiscal showdown with minimal political damage, a stark contrast to the disastrous 16-day shutdown.

Republicans said they will now spend the next eight months focusing on Obama's rollout of the health-care law and the struggling economy ahead of this year's midterm elections. Leaders even allowed the bill to pass ahead of schedule, so that lawmakers could leave early for a two-week recess before the potential snowfall.

Still, Tuesday's actions pierced the relative calm that Boehner and House Republicans had enjoyed since the shutdown ended in mid-October. The speaker appeared more comfortable than at any time in his three-year reign, taking shots at outside conservative groups that had opposed his previous deals with Democrats.

At the outset of these debt talks, some of Boehner's fiercest critics made clear that they would not punish him if he caved — but in the end, he rediscovered the limits of his power.

House Republicans are more content with his stewardship than they were a year ago, when he survived a coup attempt. But they remain unwilling to vote for some compromises, preferring the ideological purity of opposing something they know will pass with Democratic support.

"It wasn't exactly a profile in courage," Rep. Devin Nunes (Calif.), one of the 28 Republicans who voted yes, said afterward. "You had members saying they hoped it passed but unwilling to vote for it."

Boehner's inability to rally his caucus on the debt limit cast new doubt on his ability to move immigration legislation this year, an effort that seemed to gather momentum two weeks ago when his leadership team announced a summary of core principles. But House conservatives oppose providing legal status to illegal immigrants already in the country, and late last week Boehner slowed consideration of the legislation.

House Minority Whip Steny H. Hoyer (D-Md.) mocked Republicans for their initial inability to guarantee 20 votes for the debt bill once it was clear they could not pass their own. "Isn't that pathetic that they can only get 18 votes to ensure that their nation can pay its bills?" Hoyer said to reporters.

Republicans acknowledged this week that there were virtually no circumstances under which they could approve a debt-ceiling increase solely from their side of the aisle, a position that left them no leverage in negotiations with Senate Democrats and the White House.

"The natural reluctance is obvious," Rep. Peter Roskam (Ill.), the chief deputy whip, said of his GOP colleagues.

Conservative advocacy groups opposed the clean bill, and the Senate Conservatives Fund, a group affiliated with the tea party movement, blasted the speaker in an e-mail, saying, "Boehner must be replaced."

Although no such coup is on the horizon, Boehner's last plan crumbled Monday during an informal survey of members on the House floor. Conservatives told the leaders that Boehner would not receive their support, with members of the Republican Study Committee and tea party supporters firmly opposed.

Earlier Monday night, a contentious meeting in the Capitol basement made the leaders wary of proceeding. According to participants, several House Republicans who are leaving to run for Senate seats were particularly upset with the option that Boehner's team had presented. One of those Republicans was Rep. Tom Cotton (Ark.), a decorated Army veteran.

Cotton, who is in a neck-and-neck race with Sen. Mark Pryor (D), opposed raising the debt limit but did not want to vote against the plan to link the military-pension issue to the debt-ceiling increase.

After Cotton objected to the plan Monday, Boehner forcefully pushed back, saying that the failure to get a Republican majority left them with nothing but bad choices.

Speaking to reporters Tuesday morning, he said, "When you don't have 218 votes, you have nothing."

Boehner sounded regretful when asked to explain the turn of events, saying he wished the White House had been more open to dealmaking.

"This is a lost opportunity. We could have sat down and worked together in a bipartisan manner to find cuts and reforms that are greater than increasing the debt limit," he said, adding: "I am disappointed, to say the least."

Boehner allies said that his chief priority late Monday, beyond avoiding default, was to avoid a GOP rebellion and another media frenzy spotlighting Republican disarray.

As lawmakers gathered at a Capitol Hill club for the morning meeting, GOP leaders spent the first 30 minutes getting an update on fundraising and political campaigns. Then, without warning, the speaker told the group that he was giving up on the other efforts and bringing a clean bill to the floor.

Some lawmakers were surprised by the abrupt way the speaker shared the news. "I'm not sure what I heard in there," Rep. Jim Gerlach (Pa.) said as he left the session.

After the meeting, Boehner's dark humor showed as he entered his weekly news conference. "Happy, happy, happy," he mused to reporters as he strolled toward the lectern. Ten minutes later, as he left the building, he began to sing softly to himself, as he stepped outside.

"Plenty of sunshine coming my way," he said.