



Office of Senate President Pro Tempore Del Marsh
Press Clips
Tuesday, July 08, 2014

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Ranking the most conservative and most liberal members of the Alabama Senate: Today in politics (AL.com)

Alabama's known as a conservative state, but there are shades of gray even within its solidly red legislature.

The Sunlight Foundation recently crunched the numbers on voting records from every state legislator. The voting records were then used to calculate how liberal or conservative every Alabama legislator is relative to their peers. You can read the methodology behind the rankings [here](#).

In the Alabama Senate, the analysis shows the polar ends of the partisan spectrum are held by Republican Shadrack McGill on the conservative side and Democrat Bobby Singleton on the liberal side. After a controversial single term, McGill is not seeking reelection to his Senate seat. The second-most conservative Senator, Scott Beason, is also leaving the Senate. Earlier this month, Beason lost out on a bid to replace retiring Rep. Spencer Bachus.

Most of the others fall within a fairly-tight spectrum with the Republicans particularly close when it comes to ideology.

The study's author is quick to note, however, the use of the terms "conservative" and "liberal," aren't the same from legislative body to legislative body. In other words, what's considered "conservative" in California might be considered moderate here.

The rankings also look at how the individual legislators work together and their success in having their legislation co-sponsored and passed. That information is used in effort to determine how partisan each legislative body is. Overall, Alabama's legislature is seen as fairly middle-of-the-road when it comes to political partisanship.

A study by the Washington Post that was used in the Sunlight Foundation's study shows Alabama almost in the middle of the partisan spectrum. According to the study, the least-polarized state legislature is Rhode Island and the most polarized is California.

Here are the 10 most conservative State Senators according to the Sunlight Foundation:

Shadrack McGill , R- 8th District, DeKalb, Jackson, Madison
Scott Beason , R- 17th District, Blount, Jefferson, St. Clair
Rusty Glover , R-34th District, Mobile
Bill Hightower , R-35th District, Mobile
Tripp Pittman, R-32nd District, Baldwin
Paul Sanford , R-7th District, Madison
Gerald Allen , R-21st District, Hale, Pickens, Tuscaloosa
Jimmy Holley, R-31st District, Coffee, Covington, Dale, Houston
Clay Scofield, R-9th District, Blount, Madison, Marshall
Phil Williams, R-10th District, Cherokee, Etowah

10 most liberal State Senators according to the Sunlight Foundation:

Bobby Singleton , D-24th District, Bibb, Choctaw, Greene, Hale, Marengo, Perry, Sumter, Tuscaloosa
Quinton Ross Jr., D-26th District, Montgomery
Rodger Smitherman , D-18th District, Jefferson
Vivian Davis Figures , D-33rd District, Mobile
Linda Coleman , D-20th District, Jefferson
Priscilla Dunn, D-19th District, Jefferson
Billy Beasley, D-28th District, Barbour, Bullock, Henry, Lee, Macon, Russell
Tammy Irons, D-1st District Colbert, Lauderdale
Mark Keahey , D-22nd District Baldwin, Choctaw, Clarke, Conecuh, Escambia, Mobile, Monroe, Washington
Roger Bedford, D-6th District, Colbert, Fayette, Franklin, Lamar, Lawrence, Marion, Winston
Note: No ranking was given for Hank Sanders, D-Selma.

What are your thoughts? Do you consider your State Senator conservative (or liberal) enough?

[Ala. senators continue push for Constitutional Convention to rein in Federal government \(Yellowhammer News\)](#)

Alabama Senators Arthur Orr (R-Decatur) and Trip Pittman (R-Montrose) have for the past several months been engaged in a coordinated process with legislators from around the U.S. to move the country toward a state-led Constitutional Convention for the first time in history.

In short, a convention of the states is widely viewed as a last-ditch effort to push back against an overreaching federal government. Potential amendments being kicked around include term limits on federal lawmakers and caps on taxation and spending.

Roughly 100 state legislators from 32 states assembled at Mt. Vernon, Virginia last December to begin laying out ground rules that would be followed should such a convention ever be convened.

That process continued late last week when the Assembly of State Legislatures met again at the Indiana State Capitol in Indianapolis.

The Assembly divided themselves into three committees: Judicial, Rules and Procedures, and Communications and Planning.

Sen. Orr was selected to serve on the Judicial Committee, which discussed how many states are currently calling for a convention, what type of notification is required for a call to be received by Congress, and other matters relating to the legal process of calling for a convention.

Sen. Pittman was selected to the Committee on Rules and Procedures. Among other things, Pittman's committee affirmed the Assembly's commitment to one state, one vote, meaning voting at any potential future conventions would not be based on each state's population. It takes an affirmative vote from three-fourths (38) of the states to actually amend the Constitution.

No issues were formally discussed during the meeting. The group worked instead on the process, procedures and planning.

The Assembly's focus on a "strict framework" stems from the fact that Article V of the U.S. Constitution leaves some ambiguity in the process of calling for a convention of the states. That has led to some concerns that a convention would be an unruly affair.

Sen. Pittman sought to ease those concerns after last December's meeting, noting that several checks were being put in place to make a "runaway" convention impossible.

"We're just meeting to put some rules and procedures in place, but this would be very structured," he said. "The only way I'd support it is if it was a specific issue convention."

Pittman reaffirmed his commitment to that process after last week's meeting.

"Limiting the Federal Government is not going to happen inside the political culture and process of Washington, D.C.," he told Yellowhammer. "It will require the States utilizing the Article V amendment process to reign in the excesses of the Federal authority. The first step is to draft and approve rules under which an Amendment Convention could safely take place. During this past week's meeting in Indianapolis, I served on the Rules and Procedures Committee. We adopted the historical and fundamental rule of each state delegation having one vote. Now we can move forward with the additional rules and procedures necessary for a limited Article V Amendment Convention."

Sen. Orr said he believes it is a positive step that legislators from all over the country have come together to start discussing an Article V convention.

"The meeting was but one more small step in what will be a very, very long process," he said. "But one of the reasons, I believe, states have never come close to an Article V convening is that the state legislators from among the states rarely talk to one another and never have the ability to establish relationships of mutual trust. This process is changing the status quo."

Agency says Alabama Medicaid rolls top 1 million (Anniston Star)

The number of Alabamians on Medicaid has topped 1 million, officials of the state Medicaid Agency said Monday.

The state's numbers show enrollment jumping by nearly 30,000 early this year as the Affordable Care Act came online — and they seem to contradict earlier reports showing Alabama's Medicaid enrollment in decline.

"No, enrollment has not gone down," Robin Rawls, a spokeswoman for the Alabama Medicaid Agency, said Monday.

Since the 2008 recession, Alabama lawmakers have struggled yearly with ways to pay for Medicaid, a joint state-and-federal program that provides health insurance for some people living in poverty. Fewer than 800,000 people were enrolled in Alabama's program before the 2008 stock market crash, and numbers have climbed steadily since, even as the economy seemed to improve post-recession. Medicaid has taken up an increasing share of the state's \$1.8 billion General Fund budget, and lawmakers in 2011 transferred more than \$400 million from a state trust fund to help pay for the program.

Medicaid officials predicted last year that the number of people eligible for the program would top 1 million, or roughly one Alabamian in five.

Those officials also fretted about the "woodwork effect" under the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare. New Medicaid clients would come out of the woodwork, the theory went, once they applied for Obamacare and found out they were eligible for Medicaid all along. Gov. Robert Bentley had already declined an optional expansion of Medicaid, paid for mostly by the federal government, arguing that the state still couldn't afford to pay for its share of the expansion. New "woodwork" enrollees, however, couldn't be turned away.

A report released earlier this month by the federal Centers for Medicaid Services suggested that Alabama might not have seen a woodwork effect after all. That report showed Alabama's enrollment declining 4 percent between February and April.

The CMS report counted only full enrollees in Medicaid — not people with partial Medicaid coverage, such as the birth control coverage the state provides to some low-income women. But even some of the state's own statistics, outdated but available on the Medicaid Agency's website, seemed to show a decline in enrollment this year.

Rawls said the state now has two systems for counting enrollment, a new system that the state adopted to comply with the Affordable Care Act and an older system the state is slowly transitioning away from. The seeming decline appears only in the older system, which is no longer accurate, she said.

"It's underreporting the numbers," she said.

Rawls sent The Star numbers from the newer system. They show roughly 972,000 people on Medicaid in October, when enrollment for insurance under the Affordable Care Act first opened. Enrollment jumped to 1 million in January, after ACA's first enrollment deadline passed. In March, the latest month for which numbers were available, 1,020,000 people were enrolled in Medicaid.

Rawls said around 23,000 of those new enrollees were children who had been enrolled in the state-funded AllKids insurance program, and were moved to Medicaid because the Affordable Care Act required the change.

Just how many others came on board because of the woodwork effect is hard to say, said Robin Rudowitz, an analyst for the Kaiser Family Foundation, a nonprofit which studies health care issues. Rudowitz said there are a number of reasons why enrollment could go up or down, including seasonal changes and fluctuations in the economy. In states where Medicaid wasn't expanded, she said, officials weren't always keeping count of "woodwork" enrollees.

"In states that are expanding, there's a need to keep close track of the new enrollment numbers because of the match rate," she said, referring to the federal matching funds for Medicaid expansion. Rudowitz said Medicaid expansion states showed much larger increases in enrollment than non-expansion states — something experts had long expected.

Of the million Alabamians on Medicaid, most don't have the option of getting employer-provided insurance. Children in poverty-level households make up nearly half of the total, with nursing home residents and people with disabilities making up much of the rest of the total.

Roughly more than 100,000 women are enrolled in a state Medicaid program that provides birth control to low-income women — but that program doesn't cover other services.

Govt. healthcare explosion: Alabama Medicaid rolls top 1 million for first time (Yellowhammer News)

Over 1 million Alabamians are now enrolled in Medicaid, the government healthcare program for families and individuals with low incomes or certain disabilities.

According to the Alabama Medicaid Agency, the number of Alabamians on the program jumped by roughly 30,000 this year as ObamaCare started taking effect, spiking Medicaid's enrollment above the 1 million mark for the first time in state history.

1,020,000 people were enrolled in Medicaid as of March, the most recent available numbers. Part of the increased enrollment also includes over 100,000 Alabama women who currently received free birth control through Medicaid, but none of the program's other services.

In 2003, Medicaid consumed 18 percent Alabama's General Fund budget. This year that number has skyrocketed to an incredible 35 percent. Roughly 220,000 Alabamians have been added to Medicaid's rolls since the housing market crashed in 2008. And in spite of the slowly improving economy, the Medicaid boom isn't showing any signs of slowing down.

Alabama Governor Robert Bentley has made Medicaid reform one of his top priorities since taking office in 2011. He established the Alabama Medicaid Advisory Commission in October of 2012 to "evaluate the financial stability of Alabama Medicaid and the care that is provided to patients." In 2013, he signed into law a bill based on the commission's findings, moving the state from a "fee-for-service" model to a "managed care" structure. Under "managed care," the government basically says "we have X dollars to provide care," and private companies are tasked with finding innovative ways to make it work.

It is too early to determine how effective the Medicaid reforms will ultimately be, but the implementation of the president's healthcare law has put an additional strain on the program.

The success of ObamaCare is at least in part contingent on states' willingness to expand Medicaid to cover adults who earn up to 138 percent of the federal poverty level. The federal government

promised to pay 100 percent of the expansion's cost for the first three years, then would start decreasing its share of the costs in future years down to 90 percent.

Many conservatives rejected the idea immediately, noting that Alabama having to cover even 10 percent of the expansion would be unrealistic. Lawmakers had to borrow \$400 million from the Alabama Trust Fund in 2011 just to make up for the massive shortfall in the General Fund Budget. Piling on more Medicaid enrollees would be insurmountable, they said.

RELATED: Hold the line on Medicaid expansion, Gov. Bentley, we've got your back
But Alabama Democrats have continued making Medicaid expansion their top priority in the Legislature, as well as on the campaign trail.
Senate Minority Leader Vivian Figures (D-Mobile) penned an open letter to Gov. Bentley touting the benefits of making the ever-growing program even larger.

"I plead with you to reconsider your stance on Medicaid expansion," she wrote.

Parker Griffith, the Democrats' nominee for governor, has made Medicaid expansion the centerpiece of his campaign.

"The first day of my administration, I will call a special session to expand Medicaid," he proclaimed at a recent event.

Bentley, however, has maintained that expanding the program is not in the state's best interest.

Here's an excerpt from his 2014 State of the State address:

Under Obamacare, Medicaid would grow even larger... Here in Alabama alone, an estimated 300,000 more people would be added to the Medicaid role, to a system that by our own admission is absolutely broken and flawed.

The federal government has said they will give us money to expand. But how can we believe the federal government will keep its word? The anything but Affordable Care Act has done nothing to gain our trust.

First, they told us we could keep our doctor – that turned out not to be true. Next, they told us we could keep our policy – that's not true. Then they told us our premiums would not go up – nothing could be further from the truth. Now they are telling us we'll get free money to expand Medicaid.

Ladies and Gentlemen, nothing is free. The money the federal government is spending with wild abandon is not federal dollars – those are your dollars, your hard-earned tax dollars. There is no difference between federal money and your money.

Our great nation is 17.2 trillion dollars in debt and it increases by 2-billion dollars every single day.

That is why I cannot expand Medicaid in Alabama. We will not bring hundreds of thousands into a system that is broken and buckling.

But even if Gov. Bentley sticks to his word and refuses to expand Medicaid, it's current growth trajectory will undoubtedly pose one of the greatest challenges of his second term.

Alabama's new prison task force falls short on racial diversity requirement (al.com)

MONTGOMERY, Alabama --- Legislation that set up Alabama's new Prison Reform Task Force said the panel "shall reflect" the state's racial diversity, but that did not happen.

Only two of the 25 members are African-American.

Blacks make up about 26 percent of the state's population, according to the Census Bureau.

That means the panel should have included at least six African-Americans to meet the diversity requirement.

"It's always a concern to me on any task force or commission that's formed if it's not representative of the makeup of the state," Sen. Vivian Figures, D-Mobile, one of the two African-Americans.

The other is Rep. Barbara Boyd, D-Anniston.

The Prison Reform Task Force has just started its work with the Council of State Governments Justice Center on proposed changes to Alabama's criminal justice system.

All three branches of state government signed on to the effort to improve the state's overfilled prisons and head off possible intervention by the federal government.

The task force met for the first time last week.

It plans to meet several more times this year and draft bills to present to the Legislature next year.

Sen. Cam Ward, R-Alabaster, the task force chairman, said the way the board was set up, with about a dozen officials making appointments, led to a lack of coordination on racial diversity. Ward sponsored the resolution creating the task force.

Ward said he was more concerned with philosophical diversity, and he said he believes the board has that.

Ward made three appointments, including Figures. He also chose a representative from the Alabama Appleseed Center for Law & Justice, which advocates for low-income families, and from the Alabama Policy Institute, a conservative think tank.

"My biggest deal was I wanted to make sure you had the entire political perspective. That's where I was coming from in the appointment process," Ward said.

Figures said she was confident that Ward would allow input from all sources but said the racial makeup is still a concern. She said she would not be in favor of trying to change it at this point because that would involve having people already on the panel step aside.

The racial diversity clause is commonly included in legislative resolutions and bills. Figures said a stronger clause that says the appointing authorities have to coordinate their choices would better ensure diversity.

State law makes stormwater management a community challenge (Anniston Star)

New legislation allows counties and cities to partner together to manage stormwater runoff, but Calhoun County officials aren't sure what direction they will take as they try to re-organize environmental efforts after paying hefty state fines.

Last week the Calhoun County Commission heard a preliminary report on its stormwater runoff system from a representative of CDG Engineers. The commission hired the company in January to help with paperwork connected to the county's maintenance of stormwater runoff. Last year, Calhoun County, along with several counties and cities across the state, were fined by the Alabama Department of

Environmental Management for violating new guidelines on filing paperwork and expanding educational resources on storm water management.

"We weren't doing anything illegally," said County Engineer Brian Rosenbalm, on the county's adherence to standards of managing stormwater runoff. "But in terms of outreach, and advertising, we weren't doing what we were supposed to be doing."

The Department of Environmental Management monitors stormwater systems to make sure harmful chemicals from roadways and commercial industries don't pollute natural bodies of water. The department has different guidelines for cities and counties based on population.

CDG, which is under contract with the county for \$12,200 for 2014, is still trying to parse its way through legislation passed earlier this year that changes how local entities manage stormwater runoff, but the biggest takeaway from Thursday's meeting is that cities and counties can work together to manage the system. That's crucial for Calhoun County, which could join forces with Oxford, Anniston and Jacksonville. When the county was slapped with a \$14,000 fine from the Department of Environmental Management last year, Anniston and Oxford were staring at their own fines of \$13,000 and \$14,000 respectively.

Most importantly, said state Sen. Cam Ward, R-Alabaster, the bill's sponsor, it will save all parties involved some cash.

"The whole issue is confusing," Ward said Monday. "But the bottom line is, municipalities were losing money."

Ward said his bill allows smaller cities to work together to manage storm water, which he said had become an unfunded mandate that cities with limited resources couldn't keep up with.

"That's how it used to be years ago," said Rosenbalm, referring to the county's relationship with Anniston, Oxford and Jacksonville on managing stormwater runoff. "And I think now, we have great relationship with all the cities, I think this is something we can make happen again."

The benefit for all parties involved is a matter of money, said Bill Bauer, the engineer with CDG working with the county on stormwater management.

"It's not inexpensive to manage all of this," Bauer said. "Now, when you're talking about different jurisdictions coming together, there might be some butting of heads, but really this is about cost."

The degree to which local cities will want to work with Calhoun County, though, remains to be seen. Anniston City Manager Brian Johnson said Monday that while he's open to discussion with the county about stormwater management, it was the county's oversight that got Anniston in trouble to begin with.

"It was my understanding they were submitting to ADEM on our behalf, and ADEM said, 'no, unacceptable,' and that's when we got the fine," Johnson said. "The cities were unaware of these problems until the county said, 'yeah, it's all separate now, you're on your own.'"

Johnson said that since then Anniston has taken it upon itself to set up a new stormwater management system, and under Ward's legislation is proposing a fee for city residents to help pay for the system, without any resources from the county.

That fee is a key component of the new legislation that has Calhoun County Commissioner J.D. Hess worried. Hess said if the cities are allowed to collect a fee for stormwater management, it limits how much of a similar tax or fee the county could levy on residents.

"We're paying attention to that, because it's important," Hess said. "That affects us."

Right now, the county hasn't levied a tax for stormwater runoff — Rosenbalm said there is no plan in place to levy such a tax — and it's not clear how many residents outside of city jurisdictions could be obligated to pay such a tax.

"We're trying to look into that now," said Bauer, who added he didn't know if such a provision would come into play even if the cities and county worked together.

The Department of Environmental Management fined Calhoun County for filing stormwater management plans late, and for being out of compliance with educational standards. That educational outreach, as well as advertising, Rosenbalm said, is the biggest cost that comes from managing stormwater runoff, but exactly how much money it will cost Calhoun County is still to be determined. "Honestly, I have no idea," Rosenbalm said Monday. "Hopefully we'll learn soon."

[Pelham issues one-year moratorium on new payday loan, pawn shops, similar businesses \(al.com\)](#)

Declaring them "detrimental" to development, the Pelham City Council tonight issued a one-year moratorium on payday and title loan businesses, check-cashing establishments, pawn shops and certain other business types.

The action does not affect any existing businesses of the type listed under the moratorium from continuing to operate. "This is nothing more than what other municipalities have put forward in Jefferson and Shelby County," Councilman Ron Scott said at tonight's meeting.

"No one who is currently in business today will be put out of business. Nobody who is in business today will have difficulty in receiving a new business license to continue to do business. None of these actions will have any effect on our cash flow" for the city, Scott said.

Simply put: "We want to take a one-year breather," he said.

The council's resolution specifically lists "payday loan, car title loan, check cashing, gold and silver brokers, tattoo parlor, pawn shop, vape shop, tobacco shop and used automobile sales businesses."

The resolution states the council "finds that over-development" of the specified businesses "would be detrimental to the City's development and effectively limit the ability of the City to attract diverse types of business."

Scott noted concerns about proliferation of the businesses on Highway 31 through Pelham. "We've had multiple people in the retail development arena tell us we need to look at and evaluate what this business corridor on 31 looks like" if the city wants to recruit new businesses, he said.

Pelham plans to reassess zoning ordinances pertaining to the specific businesses and an overall master plan for the city. Scott said the municipality wants to hear from the public and the business owners.

"We just need a year to pause and do some analysis and gather some information," Scott said. "Hopefully after one year we will have some answers and be able to put together a plan. ... This will not be the last attention paid to this issue by this body over the next 365 days."

The Helena City Council over the past several months has maintained a moratorium on payday loan businesses and pawn shops as it attempts to figure out how zoning ordinances should handle the shops.

Council President Rick Hayes said the issue is an opportunity for the Pelham Planning Commission and the newly formed Commercial Development Authority to explore possible ways to handle the opening of new businesses.

"We just don't want to become too far down one path," Hayes said. It's an opportunity to develop plans for "what's going to be in the best interest of Pelham long term."

[Alabama highway board approves \\$25 million loan for county road and bridge projects \(al.com\)](#)

MONTGOMERY, Alabama --- A state board today approved a \$25 million loan to allow 21 Alabama counties to match federal dollars for road and bridge projects.

The state will borrow the money from PNC Bank, which was chosen over five other banks that submitted bids.

The Alabama Highway Finance Corporation approved the loan at a meeting at the State Capitol. The corporation is a public entity established by the Legislature to sell bonds for road projects.

Board members Gov. Robert Bentley, Attorney General Luther Strange, Transportation Director John Cooper and Finance Director Bill Newton attended today's meeting, as did State Treasurer Young Boozer.

The \$25 million loan will finance the Rural Assistance Match Program, RAMP, created by the Legislature in 2013.

PNC's bid was for a 1.7 percent interest rate over seven years for a total net interest cost of about \$1.7 million. That was lower than bids submitted by SunTrust, Cadence Bank, BBVA Compass and Bancorp South. Wells Fargo submitted a bid that did not conform to the specifications.

Rushton Rice, a state financial adviser and president of Rice Advisory LLC, said the bank loan would be cheaper for the state than a bond issue because of reduced fees and other costs.

The debt will be paid from state gasoline tax revenue.

About 220 projects are planned for the program, transportation officials said.

The counties taking part in RAMP are Bibb, Bullock, Chilton, Clay, Cleburne, Coosa, Crenshaw, Dale, Fayette, Geneva, Hale, Henry, Lawrence, Lowndes, Marengo, Marion, Perry, Pickens, Randolph, Wilcox and Winston.

Each of those counties can receive up to \$1 million in RAMP funds to match up to \$4 million in federal money for approved projects. They can also get another \$1.6 million in federal funds if they pay the \$400,000 match, State Innovative Programs Engineer Edward Austin said.

RAMP was created in conjunction with the Alabama Transportation Rehabilitation and Improvement Program, announced by Bentley in 2012. Over time, ATRIP is expected to provide about \$1 billion for county road and bridge projects, with priorities given to substandard or obsolete bridges.

RAMP was set up for counties that could not afford to pay their 20 percent match for ATRIP.

The two programs provide a huge funding boost for counties, which normally get \$533,000 a year in federal funds for road projects.

Former Sen. Rick Santorum endorses Gary Palmer in Alabama's 6th District race (al.com)

Conservative stalwart and former U.S. Sen. Rick Santorum has endorsed Gary Palmer in the Republican runoff for Alabama's 6th Congressional district.

Santorum is popular in Alabama – in the 2012 presidential primary, he won Alabama with 35 percent of the vote, beating out Newt Gingrich and eventual nominee Mitt Romney.

"Gary has been at the forefront of the battle for our conservatives ideals not just in Alabama but across the country," Santorum said in a release. "His leadership at the Alabama Policy Institute has provided solutions for some of our country's biggest challenges from economic and tax issues, to reducing the size of government and to keeping our families strong."

Palmer welcomed the support. "I have known Rick for years and I am thankful for his support," Palmer said. "We both strongly believe that our enormous debt is the price we are paying for expanding the role of government beyond what the Constitution prescribes."

Along with Santorum's support comes support from his PAC, the Patriot Voices PAC.

Palmer is facing fellow Republican Paul DeMarco in the July 15 runoff. The winner of that runoff will face Democrat Avery Vise and Libertarian Aimee Love in the general election in November.

Sen. Jeff Sessions says immigration cost Eric Cantor his House Speaker post: It was 'dominant issue' (al.com)

Sen. Jeff Sessions said Rep. Eric Cantor's defeat was due to his support for immigration reform that many thought would lead to amnesty for millions of illegal immigrants.

Speaking on Fox News, Sessions, R-AL, said Cantor's shocking defeat by Tea Party-backed political newcomer David Brat was due to concerns over the House Majority Leader's views on immigration reform.

"I don't think there's any doubt about it," said Sessions said to host Shannon Bream. "The dominant issue in that campaign was immigration. You had smart candidate (Brat) who was able to articulate it in an effective way and raise questions about the willingness of the incumbent to be clear on it and rightly or wrongly people perceived (Brat) was correct.

"I like and respect Congressman Cantor a lot, but I'm going to tell you, people in this country are hurting," Sessions said. "Their jobs are threatened. Their wages are down significantly and the idea that we're going to have a bill to double the flow of illegal immigrants and guest workers into America to take jobs that Americans need to be having is just rejected by the people once it's clearly articulated."

Bream asked Sessions, one of the most outspoken critics on the White House's immigration enforcement policies, if Cantor's defeat was a signal any reform legislation is dead before it is introduced.

Sessions didn't think so, at least not completely.

"The big business and special interests and political interests want it still and are trying to make it happen, but I think this election was a major defeat for that agenda," he said.

Sessions: 'I predicted this a year ago'

Sessions also said recent reports of waves of children crossing over the border seeking amnesty comes as no surprise.

"I predicted this a year ago. You keep saying you are not going to enforce the law and you particularly are not going to enforce it for young people and it creates the perception and it has created the perception around the world that we're wide open that children can just come and they will be permitted to stay.

"It's stunning. It's absolutely unbelievable."

The Obama administration recently announced it was designating a third U.S. military base as a housing site for children who are illegally immigrating to the U.S. without their parents or relatives. Reuters reported Fort Sill, Oklahoma will be used to house as many as 1,200 "unaccompanied minors," who have made their way to the U.S.

Similar shelters are already open at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas and Naval Base Ventura County in Southern California.

The cost of housing the children could be as much as \$2 billion in the coming year.

Sessions cited a Department of Homeland Security memo that showed 95 percent of the people that have come to the country are doing so because they believe they will be allowed to stay. Creating amnesty programs would only make such problems worse, he contended.

"We have laws on the books," Sessions said. "It's not legal to come here if you're a youth or adult. Give me a break. Stop people from coming on the false believe that it's going to be legal and they are going to be allowed to stay."

[In dissent, Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore says evidence of lesbian relationship could have helped sex-abuse defense \(al.com\)](#)

In his dissenting opinion, state Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore said an Eight Mile man convicted of sexual abuse should have been allowed to use information about his victims' homosexual relationship as part of his defense.

On June 6, the high court denied Sherman Fitzgerald Tate the opportunity for a second look in the case in which he was found guilty of sodomizing two teens at an alternative interventional school for troubled kids.

Tate, 37, was an employee and sometime mentor at the Mobile Youth Advocate Program, working with youths. And according to trial testimony in 2013, Tate used his position to molest two 15-year-old girls enrolled in the program.

However, in his dissent, Chief Justice Moore said he felt that if Tate's attorneys had been able to enter evidence of the girls' "romantic relationship," it might have shown their "alleged bias against Tate or their collusion." The possibility of cross-examining the victims about their relationship also could have produced relevant information to the defense, he wrote.

"Tate's knowledge of the victims' romantic relationship, coupled with the fact that Tate informed the mother of one of the victims of that relationship, would make the proposed cross-examination relevant to show that the victims had possibly fabricated the charges against Tate," Moore said in his opinion.

The entire opinion can be read here: Roy Moore dissent Sherman Tate.pdf.

Jeff Deen, Tate's attorney during the trial, on Monday praised Moore's opinion but questioned the overall court's denial considering the rationale cited in his argument. He said the prosecution "presented it like they were two girls who just happened to be classmates," which wasn't the case.

"I just can't understand their logic." -- Defense attorney Jeff Deen on the Alabama Supreme Court and Court of Criminal Appeals.

Deen also took issue with the Criminal Court of Appeals' denial of Tate's appeal on similar grounds.

"I just can't understand their logic," he said.

Deen said he felt like the decision by Circuit Court Judge John Lockett not to allow the relationship testimony during the trial, as well as the subsequent denials, was based on the shock value of certain allegations. Tate had also been charged with rape, but was acquitted by the jury.

"I think it's an emotional type thing because there's sex involved," Deen said. "I'm still mad about it."

As for the possibility that the victims could have fabricated their accusations to get back at Tate for telling one of their parents of the relationship, he said he felt revenge wasn't a factor. Although, Deen said, since there was no physical evidence presented of an attack, they could have made up the charges to help one of the girls allegedly avoid getting sent back to the "reform school."

"They know if you tell on somebody else you get yourself out of trouble," he said.

In February 2013, Judge Lockett sentenced Tate to eight-and-a-half years in prison.

[Mobile County school system to offer free lunches to all students \(al.com\)](#)

MOBILE, Alabama -- The Mobile County school system has qualified for a federal program to cover free lunches for all students during the 2014-15 school year.

Suzanne Yates, director of the school system's Child Nutrition Program, applied for the Community Eligibility Provision of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which allows schools with 75 percent of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunches to offer free meals to all students.

The program was piloted in seven states beginning in 2012 and will be available for the first time ever in all states this upcoming school year, according to information from the school system. School districts must apply to participate.

"This is a great opportunity for all of our students to have lunch at no charge," said Rena Philips, the school system's marketing supervisor. "We hope that this will help alleviate some of the stigma that may come with students who receive free and reduced price lunches" now that all students are eligible for the meals, she said.

Students will not have to complete paperwork to receive the lunches, Philips said. School officials hope that more students in middle and high school who qualified for the free meals but may have been too embarrassed to apply for them will now take advantage of the healthy lunches available, she said.

The program is funded by the U.S.D.A.; there is no cost to the school system. Philips estimated that it would save most students' families about \$360 per year for younger students, who formerly paid \$2 per day for lunch, and about \$405 for older students, who paid \$2.25.

"We're just very pleased to be able to do this to support our families," Philips said. Mobile County is the largest school district in the state, with an enrollment of 59,000 students at 89 schools; last year, the system served 7.8 million lunches.

The school system began serving free breakfasts for all students last fall, through Universal Free Breakfast initiative, another federal program.

Last spring, the Mobile County school system was the first school system in Alabama to have all of its schools meet the Healthier U.S. Schools Challenge by serving more fruits, vegetables and whole grains and by promoting physical activity.

The school system was also the first in Alabama, and one of the first in the nation, to convert a school bus into a mobile kitchen for its Super Food Express summer meals program, according to information from the school system. A schedule of stops is available on www.mcpsss.com.

[Union vote scheduled at Alabama auto supplier amid investigation into health and safety complaints \(al.com\)](#)

SELMA, Alabama -- Workers at the auto supplier plant Renosol are scheduled to vote later this week on whether to organize as a part of the United Auto Workers union, The Selma Times-Journal reported.

The vote, scheduled for Thursday and Friday, comes amid an investigation into health and safety complaints at the Selma plant. Employees say they have been repeatedly exposed to chemicals that caused asthma-like symptoms.

An internal probe by the company found nothing, but an investigation by the Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration continues.

The plant and its 90 employees produce car seats for Hyundai, which has an auto assembly plant in Montgomery.

Read the full story from The Selma Times-Journal.

The UAW is seeking to expand its presence at foreign automakers across the South.

The union has said it is working on a new strategy to organize workers at Tuscaloosa County's Mercedes-Benz plant, after pro-union employees said the current effort has gone on too long without success.

[32 percent unready for math 101 \(TimesDaily\)](#)

Leaving high school and heading immediately into a college-level class is not the reality about one-third of Alabama's college-bound students face.

According to the Alabama Statewide Student Database, 32 percent of students who graduated from a public high school in Alabama in 2013 and attend a public college or university in Alabama take a remedial math course in the first year of higher education.

Students taking remedial courses met all the admission requirements, but weren't deemed ready to handle college-level mathematics.

It's not a new problem in Alabama. For the past five academic years, the percentage of students in remedial courses has hovered around 33 percent.

So where did education go wrong?

Historical problem

Dr. Thomas Calhoun, vice president of enrollment management at the University of North Alabama, said there historically has been a divide between secondary education and higher education. Dating back to before World War II, he said, a high school's goal was to prepare students to work.

"Public school systems weren't designed to feed students into college," Calhoun said.

"Public education was designed to send students to the work place. It has taken since the end of World War II to see that our curriculum was designed for students to go to big factories or industry.

"Higher education in this country was designed as a fairly elite enterprise. It was developed for those people that were privileged and parents that got their students into enrichment programs or high-achieving private schools."

There has been a significant shift from the high school-to-workforce mindset to students being pushed more toward higher education. Secondary education as a whole has been slow to modify its standards to fit the new push.

Other factors

Other problems persist in secondary education that inhibit a smooth transition from high school-level math to a credit-earning college math classes.

Remedial classes are zero-credit courses, but carry the same price tag as classes that earn student credits toward degree completion.

High school students can complete the math courses required for graduation in the first two years of high school.

"We advise against it," Muscle Shoals High School math teacher Sherry Isbell said. "But, to be honest, many times parents like the idea of their students going through their senior year without math. I disagree with it, but they want a lighter load to take the stress off."

Math, unlike other core subjects, is a "building block" course, where each builds on the other. Taking a break stops the building, Isbell said.

And, there are students who from an early age decide they can't be successful in math.

That may have been caused by early difficulty with math or even from parents who innocently lament their own struggles with math.

Instilling math confidence isn't easy, but also is not impossible.

"A lot of times, it isn't that they don't know how to do it, but that they don't believe they can do it," Isbell said. "These students have to see that you believe they can do it before they believe they can do it.

"They also have to learn to see the little victories."

No easy solution

Just as creating math confidence isn't easy, neither is bridging the gap between high school math and college math.

Meaningful partnerships between secondary education and higher education must be formed and effective strategies for assisting struggling math students must be developed.

Dr. Cindy Stenger, chairwoman of the UNA math department, said an equally important tool is partnerships between secondary educators and their college counterparts. UNA, she said, has been deliberate in creating opportunities for work with high school math teachers.

It's part of a three-pronged approach at getting students ready for college math courses.

Stenger said she and her faculty go into classrooms across the region to work with math teachers by modeling instruction and talking about expectations.

Separate professional development also is offered to regional teachers through a math and science partnership grant.

"We want to lead the way to show them that students really can step it up," Stenger said.

For high school students, UNA invites them on campus for summer science, technology, engineering and math camps that aren't classroom-based, but expose the students to college expectations, Stenger said.

Math help

UNA piloted a program in its Math Learning Center this past academic year that paired lower-performing math students with peer tutors. The peer tutor attended the same math class and provided an additional hour of assistance outside of class.

Stenger said the results, though just one year's worth, were positive, with students who took advantage of the peer tutoring setup scoring an average of one letter grade higher on the final exam than those who passed on the opportunity.

"We are gathering data from the student and looking at final grades," Stenger said. "We are really pleased because we are seeing higher retention rates and higher grades."

The idea is that if a student is surrounded by higher-achieving students, that student is more motivated to succeed. That's the reason the university also began to phase out its traditional remedial math course and replaced it with an alternative course that is meant to address the remediation needs, but also complete the curriculum required to earn the credit.

"There have been several significant studies that have suggested that remedial courses are ineffective and there are a variety of reasons for that," Calhoun said. "One reason is that the students that tend to be grouped are all so weak that there is no influence from stronger students. We know that when students are weaker and in the presence of students that are stronger, they tend to become stronger."

The need for remediation at the state's community colleges is higher than at four-year institutions.

Northwest-Shoals Community College is identifying local high school students likely to need a developmental math course after graduation and enrolling them in those courses before graduation.

The program, Early Math Scholars, is entering its third year and is grant funded.

Math learning at Northwest-Shoals is computer-based, coupled with classroom time with an instructor for additional help.

Northwest-Shoals has two remedial math courses, but because of the structure of the courses it is possible for a student to complete both in one semester.

"The courses are really set up for students to be successful," said Crystal Ingle, assistant dean of student success at the college. "If the student doesn't pass a quiz or exam, they are able to remediate that quiz or exam and test that area again. That's part of changing the mentality so you can do this. The only way to fail is to give up."

Fast-tracking students through remedial courses saves them time and money and, if it can be done before they leave high school, sets them up for success in college-level math courses.

College and Career

At the secondary level, Alabama has put in place a plan called College and Career Ready Standards to try to meet the needs of high school students.

Isbell believes if the standards are kept in place, the gap between high school math and college math can be bridged.

But, because of the alignment with national Common Core standards, members of the Alabama Republican Party have challenged the standards, calling them federal intrusion in public education.

Isbell said, however, the standards require mastery of skills needed to understand and be successful in math starting in elementary school. When those students matriculate through the public education system, there will be fewer cracks in their math foundation. The key is letting the standards work.

"It is going to take several years to get our students where they need to be," Isbell said. "We can't hold them to those standards right now because they don't have the background to be successful. But when elementary kids get to high school, I think you are going to see a huge change in what they are able to do.

"The big thing is number sense, understanding the pattern and seeing the relationship. In the past, we've been more focused on the procedure instead of understanding why it works the way it does. When kids understand the 'why,' the procedure is easy. We've just been teaching the procedure.

"Those elementary kids that understand the 'why' will excel when they get to high school if we don't abandon the standards in the interim."

University of West Alabama begins search for new leader (Tuscaloosa News)

Committee lists characteristics needed by next president; challenges to be tackled

By Ed Enoch

Staff Writer

Published: Monday, June 16, 2014 at 11:00 p.m.

LIVINGSTON | The committee tasked with finding the next president of the University of West Alabama and a search consultant met Monday to discuss the process and what characteristics members want in the university's next leader.

The candidate portrait that emerged from Monday's discussion was that of a charismatic leader capable of successfully marketing and growing an institution in one of the state's poorest regions and one who can relate to its stakeholders and unite a campus recently divided over whether to extend the contract of former President Richard Holland.

The new president also must understand the challenges of being in Alabama's Black Belt for success in advancing the institution, according to the committee members.

UWA physical plant director Bob Holycross questioned whether the region's rural profile would be included in the information provided to candidates. Holycross noted that the lack of shopping opportunities and other attractions had made industrial recruitment difficult for the area and speculated that this would offer a similar challenge for the presidential search.

"Guys, we are right on the edge of a cliff. The direction this university goes in the next four to five years will decide its fate," committee member and Trustee Randy Hillman said.

The gradual decline of student enrollment in recent years has been a source of concern and frequent topic of discussion for board members. At a June 2 meeting, the board heard reports from administrators and consultants about strategies to reverse the decline.

The 10-person committee of board members, faculty, staff, students and alumni plans to meet again in August. There is no set timeline for the search for a permanent replacement for Holland.

Trustee Jerry Smith, chairman of the committee, said the search process should be governed by finding the right candidate for the presidency instead of a fixed timeline.

He said he would like to identify two or three finalists to bring to campus for interviews. The candidate recommended by the committee would be brought before the full board of trustees for approval.

Gene Head, senior partner and managing director of Wheless Partners Executive Search, estimated a potential candidate could be identified as early as September. The trustees said previously that they would like to find a new president within a year.

The firm working with the committee would craft an inclusive, nationwide search but one that would also quickly identify serious candidates, Head said.

"As your ambassadors throughout the country, we are going to make West Alabama known," Head said.

The firm would look at candidates' professional histories, leadership indicators, family situations and other factors as it considers candidates to recommend to the committee.

"At the end of the day, you are not recruiting a person, you are recruiting a family," Head said.

Typically, the candidates identified for jobs like UWA are presidents of similar-sized or smaller institutions, or provosts or deans from larger institutions, Head said.

The search committee includes Holycross, assistant professor and Faculty Senate President Amy Jones, interim Provost and Dean of the UWA College of Liberal Arts Tim Edwards, SGA president D'Anthony Jackson, UWA National Alumni Association President Justin Smith, and assistant professor Aliquippa Allen. The trustees on the committee are Jerry Smith, Victor Vernon, Shelia Cloud and Hillman.

[Steel import dumping puts Alabama workers and communities at risk, protesters say \(al.com\)](#)

FAIRFIELD, Alabama -- American steel workers, including those in the Birmingham area, face an uncertain future amid the dumping of steel imports in the U.S. market.

That was the message at a rally held this afternoon by the Alliance for American Manufacturing at U.S. Steel Corp.'s Fairfield operations.

An estimated 900 people, including U.S. Steel workers, members of trade unions, politicians and local business owners and residents turned out for the rally, part of a series of events being held across the country to raise awareness of the issue.

U.S. Rep. Terri Sewell, a Democrat from Selma, said the issue is one that crosses party lines. Alabama Republican congressmen Spencer Bachus and Robert Aderholt also spoke at the rally and echoed Sewell's comments.

"We're standing up for things being made in America and made in Alabama by American workers like yourselves," Sewell said.

According to AAM, nine countries, but mainly South Korea, are flooding the U.S. with steel pipe priced below cost to squeeze out U.S. producers. The situation puts jobs at companies like U.S. Steel, and the communities they call home, at risk.

In July 2013, domestic steel producers filed a trade case that is pending at the U.S. Department of Commerce. A decision is due in July.

U.S. Steel employs about 1,500 people overall at its Fairfield site.

Patrick Mullarkey, plant manager for the Tubular Operations, said the facility is holding its own, but it can always use more business.

If the resolution of the pending trade case doesn't recognize the dumping, then nothing will stop those countries from flooding the U.S. with even more imports, he said.

A truckload of steel pipes sat next to the stage during the rally.

"That represents our livelihood...we have to protect it," Mullarkey said.

Scott Paul, president of AAM, said the issue is especially important in Birmingham, with a history that's steeped in steel production.

Pat Summerlin, an electrician who has worked at U.S. Steel's Fairfield operations for 23 years, said people beyond the steel industry could feel the effects of the issue, because the plant and its workers support the community.

"If I lose my job, that means I'm not spending money at your business," he said. "We're all connected."

[Regions creates 'General Bank' and 'Corporate Bank' and names new leadership \(al.com\)](#)

Regions Financial Corp. has realigned its business units and geographic leadership to create a "General Bank" and a "Corporate Bank" and has named the leadership of each.

The Regions General Bank will be home to those operations that serve retail, wealth management and small business customers. John Owen, the head of business lines at Regions, has been named the head of the General Bank.

The Regions Corporate Bank will be the operations that serve middle-market and large-market commercial clients. John Turner, south region president, has been named head of the Corporate Bank.

"This realignment creates a more streamlined structure at the top of the company and is a more effective model for executing our strategy, managing our performance and serving our customers," Grayson Hall, chief executive of Regions, said in a statement.

Bill Horton, the north central Alabama area president, will succeed Turner as president of the South Region, made up of Alabama, Mississippi, South Louisiana, and the Florida Panhandle. Leroy Abrahams, currently head of strategic and corporate planning, succeeds Horton as the north central Alabama area president.

John Asbury, who previously led Regions' Business Services Group, has resigned due to family considerations that require relocation.

"We appreciate John Asbury's leadership and six years of service to our company, and we understand and respect his decision," Hall said.

Owen, John.jpg
John Owen

Owen has served as head of business lines for Regions since 2012 after previously leading Regions' Consumer Services Group from 2009 to 2012 and has also led operations and technology. Before joining Regions in 2007, he served as chief executive officer of Assurant Specialty Property, a Fortune 500 company based in Atlanta. He graduated from Auburn University's School of Engineering with a bachelor's degree in aviation management.

Turner has served as president of the South Region

Turner, John.jpg
John Turner

since 2011, when he joined Regions. Turner was previously president of Whitney National Bank and Whitney Holding Corp. and served on Whitney's bank and holding company boards of directors from 2008 until 2011. Turner joined Whitney in 1994 as its Alabama regional president after serving in senior consumer and business positions with AmSouth Bank. He holds a bachelor's degree in economics from the University of Georgia. He is a former chairman of the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce, former chairman of the Mobile Area Education Foundation, a former chairman of the United Way of Southwest Alabama, a graduate of Leadership Alabama and former board member of Leadership Mobile.

Bill Horton

Horton has served as north central Alabama area president since 2008. He has managed several areas in both consumer and business services throughout his career including the BankCard, consumer lending and business banking departments. He has also managed the consumer loan and deposit product management teams. Horton organized and headed the bank's business loan, consumer loan and direct loan centers along with the home equity lending department. He served as head of mortgage banking and business banking prior to leading the community banking segment of Regions' Business Services Group. Horton holds a bachelor's degree from Jacksonville State University and is a graduate of the Graduate School of Banking at Louisiana State University. He serves on the board of the Kiwanis Club of Birmingham, the Birmingham Educational Foundation, Railroad Park Foundation, A.G. Gaston Boys & Girls Club, Birmingham Business Alliance and the Lakeshore Foundation. He is past co-chair of the United Way of Central Alabama campaign and board chair of REV Birmingham.

Leroy Abrahams

Abrahams has served as head of strategic and corporate planning since joining Regions in 2013. Abrahams previously worked for SunTrust Banks Inc. as president and chief executive of the Hampton Roads Region in Virginia. He also held roles as the retail banking executive and central group retail line of business leader. Before joining SunTrust, Abrahams held the position of consumer banking manager in eastern Tennessee for Regions Bank. Abrahams graduated from Texas Christian University with a Bachelor of Business Administration degree and a major in finance.