



The ADVISOR

TEACHERS, EMPLOYEES, and JUDICIAL



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SERVING OVER 330,000 MEMBERS

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Legislative Progress

By David G. Bronner

I was pleased to report in last month's *Advisor* that I had reviewed Governor Bentley's proposed pension reform legislation and it made reasonable and modest changes to the teacher and public employee retirement systems. Most importantly, the terms of the legislation upheld the promises made to current employees, whether vested or not, and made no changes that affected their benefits.

On March 7, I stood with Governor Bentley, Speaker of the House Mike Hubbard, President Pro Tem of the Senate Del Marsh and the sponsors of the pension reform bill from the House and Senate to announce the introduction of the pension reform bill in the Legislature. I chose to make this show of support for the bill because it is responsible and needed legislation. I am grateful to Governor Bentley, Speaker Hubbard, and President Pro Tem Marsh for ask-

ing the RSA to participate in this process. They listened when the RSA made our expertise available to them to assist in crafting the best bill possible: one that would make necessary changes to our systems to keep it viable, but that would also keep teachers' and public employees' benefits strong so that Alabama will continue to attract and retain the best candidates possible for these critically important jobs. That is simply good government.

I am also grateful for the leadership of the bill's sponsors, Senator Arthur Orr and Representatives Jamie Ison and Mac McCutcheon, who have committed to shepherd this bill through the legislative process while protecting the integrity of the original bill. While it may be tempting to some members of the Legislature to seek to amend this bill, the terms of reform in the current law are interdependent. That is to say that a change to any individual component of the bill, such

as the retirement age or the benefit factor, for instance, may drastically change the outcome of the reforms and thwart the bill's intended purpose. Responsible leaders such as Senator Orr and Representatives Ison and McCutcheon recognize the complexity of this type of legislation and have pledged to protect it.

Senator Orr is leading the charge on another piece of much needed legislation that also protects RSA's integrity. He passed a bill in the Senate that requires teachers and public employees convicted of a felony offense related to their public position to forfeit the right to retirement benefits. Representative Joe Hubbard has maneuvered this legislation through a House committee and could be before the full House and become law at any time. This is a reform of the law that RSA has long advocated and another example of good government. ■



Alabama Black Belt Adventures Thanks RSA

By David G. Bronner

RSA's media investments have primed the pump for Alabama tourism for the last twenty years. Tourism was a \$1.8 billion industry the year the RTJ Trail started. Today, it exceeds \$10.3 billion per year! Community Newspaper Holdings, Inc., whose newspapers, websites, and niche publications serve more than 150 communities in 24 states, and Raycom Media, which owns and/or operates 46 television stations in 37 markets and 18 states, have together been providing approximately \$60 million in advertising to make tourism

a true Alabama success story.

Not only do these media outlets advertise for the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail and PCH resorts, hotels and spas, but the state's outstanding Department of Tourism and the RSA have combined forces to market successful events such as Mobile's New Year's Eve MoonPie Drop to attractions like the Space Camp in Huntsville. How does the Space Camp outshine most of the other camps from Florida to California? The answer is simple: newspaper and television ads that no other Space Camp site can afford.

Clearly, events like the races at Talladega Superspeedway are successful on their own, but the tourism ads make something great even better.

In addition to TV and newspaper ads, there are 100 billboards from Minnesota to North Carolina, and thirty-second ads playing before every movie shown in iPic Theaters in California, Texas, Florida, Illinois, and elsewhere that proclaim Alabama as a wonderful place to visit.

This past week, I received a gracious letter from the board of Alabama

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Ross Bridge Receives International Accolades

Source: Marketwire

The votes have been counted and Renaissance Birmingham Ross Bridge Golf Resort & Spa is the big winner. In the past few weeks the Birmingham resort has received international recognition from several major publications and also earned its AAA Four Diamond recognition for the sixth consecutive year. Ross Bridge is the only Four Diamond hotel in Birmingham.

Travel + Leisure

(www.travelandleisure.com)

Travel + Leisure magazine highlights the "Top 500 Hotels in the World." Almost half of the winners are from the United States and Canada, with other winners spread throughout exotic locations around the globe. Renaissance Ross Bridge was recognized as a real value and makes a return to the prestigious list. "Making the Top 500 List from *Travel + Leisure* magazine is a real honor for our resort, the Birmingham area and the entire state of Alabama," said Steve Miller, general manager of Renaissance Ross Bridge. "The more I study the results, the more humbling this honor is. Our associates and the overall resort scored higher than Four Seasons Hotel Los Angeles at Beverly Hills, the Ritz-Carlton Palm Beach, Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge, the Ritz-Carlton Buckhead, the Grand Hyatt Kauai Resort & Spa, The Venetian in Las Vegas and other prestigious properties," said Steve Miller.

Golf Digest 75 Best Golf Resorts in North America

(www.golfdigest.com)

When naming the "75 Best Golf Resorts in North America," *Golf Digest*

magazine had 1,000 course-ranking panelists evaluate each golf resort's overall quality, not strictly its golf course or courses. Pebble Beach, The Cloister, Greenbrier, Broadmoor, Pinehurst, and countless Ritz-Carltons and Four Seasons all made the November 2011 list, as expected. However, so did Renaissance Birmingham Ross Bridge Golf Resort & Spa on the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail. All are exceptional golf resorts—without question. "Being recognized for an exceptionally high quality level and still being affordable to our guests makes Renaissance Ross Bridge a great choice for both the serious and novice golfers," said Miller. "To help guests recover from the fourth longest golf course in the world, we have an amazing spa staff available seven days a week."

ConventionSouth Annual Readers' Choice Award

(www.conventionsouth.com)

For years, the editorial staff at *ConventionSouth* selected the best meeting sites, venues and suppliers in the South based on nominations from their readers. In December 2011, the meeting publication named its top locations and Renaissance Ross Bridge made the list, along with several hotels that are part of the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail's Resort Collection. The meeting planners selected their top picks that have provided the highest quality service and accommodations. "Meetings are a core



Michael Clemmer - Golf Landscape Photography

part of our business at Renaissance Ross Bridge," said Miller. "Having meeting planners recognize us with this award demonstrates that our efforts to go above and beyond for meetings is being noticed. From local Birmingham businesses to international corporations such as Porsche, we welcome both meeting and leisure guests to our castle."

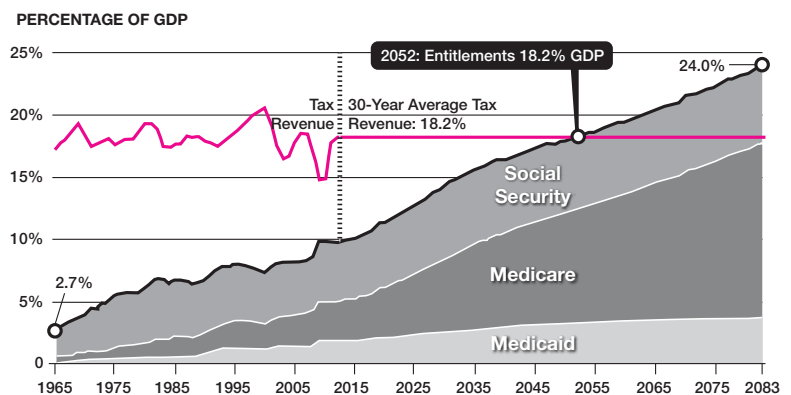
AAA Four Diamond Award

(www.aaa.com)

Continuing a 75-year tradition, AAA's professionally trained inspectors use published guidelines to conduct unannounced lodging and restaurant evaluations. A total of 1,491 hotels throughout the U.S., Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean received the Four Diamond Rating. Renaissance Ross Bridge is one of eight hotels in Alabama (six are part of the RTJ Resort Collection) to receive the Four Diamond rating. Ross Bridge received the honor for the sixth consecutive year. Collectively, Four Diamond lodging represents just 4.8 percent of the current 31,000 AAA/CAA Approved and Diamond Approved lodgings. ■

ENTITLEMENTS WILL CONSUME ALL TAX REVENUES BY 2052

If future taxes are held at the historical average, spending on Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security will consume all revenues by 2052. Because entitlement spending is funded on autopilot, no revenue will be left to pay for other government spending, including constitutional functions such as defense.



Source: Congressional Budget Office.

The Ten Worst Corporate Tax Avoiders

Source: *Washington Times*; U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders (Vermont-I)

When you read about GE paying no corporate federal taxes in 2010 while getting a \$3.2 billion rebate, does your blood start to boil?

If you listened to the corporate whining, you probably thought companies like GE paid 35% in federal taxes. Not so. It's a rare company that ponies up that amount.

For too long the American public has been hornswoggled by this century's "robber barons."

Remember, it was our tax dollars that saved the hides of many of these multinationals with colossal bailouts, and how do they say thanks?

By not paying their taxes. Nada, zero, zilch. And it's legal, thanks to Congress.

Want to know who these corporate culprits are? Look no further than the Wall of Shame where you will find the top ten Corporate Tax Dodgers, many who brought this country to the brink of an economic meltdown.

- 1) **Exxon Mobil.** In 2009, Exxon Mobil made \$19 billion in profits. Not only did Exxon avoid paying any federal income taxes that year, it actually received a \$156 million rebate from the IRS, according to its SEC filings.
- 2) **Bank of America.** Last year, Bank of America received a \$1.9 billion tax refund from the IRS, even though it made \$4.4 billion in profits and just a couple of years ago received a bailout

- 3) **General Electric.** Over the past five years, while General Electric made \$26 billion in profits in the United States, it received a \$4.1 billion refund from the IRS.
- 4) **Chevron.** In 2009, Chevron received a \$19 million refund from the IRS after it made \$10 billion in profits.
- 5) **Boeing.** Last year, Boeing, which received a \$30 billion contract from the Pentagon to build 179 airborne tankers, got a \$124 million refund from the IRS.
- 6) **Valero Energy.** Last year, Valero Energy, the 25th largest company in America with \$68 billion in sales last year received a \$157 million tax refund check from the IRS and, over the past three years, it received a \$134 million tax break from the oil and gas manufacturing tax deduction.
- 7) **Goldman Sachs.** In 2008, Goldman Sachs paid only 1.1 percent of its income in taxes even though it earned a profit of \$2.3 billion and received an almost \$800 billion bailout from the Federal Reserve and U.S. Treasury Department.
- 8) **Citigroup.** Last year, Citigroup made more than \$4 billion in profits but paid no federal income taxes, even though it received a \$2.5 trillion bail-

out from the Federal Reserve and U.S. Treasury.

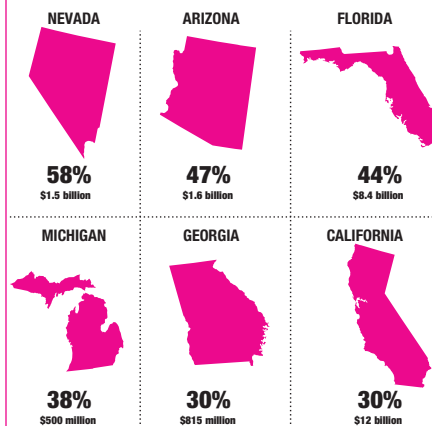
- 9) **ConocoPhillips.** ConocoPhillips, the fifth largest oil company in the United States, made \$16 billion in profits from 2007 through 2009, but received \$451 million in tax breaks through the oil and gas manufacturing deduction during those years.
- 10) **Carnival Cruise Lines.** Over the past five years, Carnival Cruise Lines made more than \$11 billion in profits, but its federal income tax rate during those years was just 1.1 percent. ■

Alabama Black Belt Adventures Thanks RSA

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Black Belt Adventures thanking the RSA for funding more than \$900,000 in newspaper and television ads about the great opportunity to fish and hunt in Alabama's Black Belt region. West Alabama has suffered for generations with a lack of industry, but with numerous hunting and fishing lodges, the area is seeing an improvement and growth in businesses. These small mom and pop operations simply could not fund these types of ads. As I have often stated, "The stronger we can make Alabama, the stronger the RSA will be for decades to come." ■

States with the highest percentage of mortgages underwater



Estimated share of the settlement
Source: National Association of Realtors; CoreLogic; state attorneys general offices; Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis

"The Award" to Alabama's CNHI

The American Society of News Editors (ASNE) awards *one* outstanding newsroom per year for excellence in news coverage. There are no size distinctions; big papers compete with smaller papers.

This year's national winner is CNHI's *The Joplin Globe* team for outstanding coverage following the devastating tornado in Joplin, Missouri. To put this win in perspective, the runner-up was Phoenix for coverage of the Rep. Gifford shooting.

The award will be presented on April 2 in Washington, D.C., at the biggest industry event of the year. (Editor's note: CNHI is headquartered in Montgomery and a major RSA investment.)

Life is Very Short — Go Enjoy Your RSA Hotels, Spa and Golf

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MONTGOMERY, AL
PERMIT NO. 402

ENJOY YOUR SPRING/SUMMER A Special Deal FOR RSA MEMBERS

The Battle House,

A Renaissance Hotel – Mobile – \$99

- April 8-9, 15-17, 22-23, 29 • May 5-10, 27-31
- June 1, 9, 15-16, 23, 28, 30

The Renaissance Riverview Plaza – Mobile – \$89

- April 8-9, 15-17, 22-23, 29 • May 5-10, 27-31
- June 1, 9, 15-16, 23, 28, 30

Marriott Grand – \$99 plus a 15% resort fee

- April 1-4, 8-12, 17-19, 22-24 • May 3, 6-8, 13-14, 20-23
- June 3-5, 10-13

Marriott Grand – RSA Golf Package – \$169

Ask for code – LOCD

Includes: Deluxe Room, One Round of Golf for Two People.

Call for Tee Times after booking package

- April 1-4, 8-12, 17-19, 22-24 • May 3, 6-8, 13-14, 20-23
- June 3-5, 10-13

Marriott Shoals – Florence – \$89

- April 1-4, 25-26, 29-30 • May 3, 10, 17, 20-21, 28-29
- June 10, 14, 24-25

Renaissance Ross Bridge – Hoover – \$99

- April 1-8, 14-16, 22-24, 29-30
- May 1, 3, 6, 11-13, 20, 23-24, 28-31
- June 3-7, 10-11, 17-21, 27-28

Opelika Marriott – \$89

- April 1-2, 4-5, 8-10, 15-18, 22, 24-25
- May 1-2, 8-9, 15, 20-31
- June 3-8, 14, 17-18, 20-21, 24-28

Prattville Marriott – \$89

- April 2, 6-12, 15, 17, 22-24, 29-30
- May 6-7, 13-16, 19-20, 23-24, 27-29
- June 3-12, 16-17, 24, 28-29

Renaissance Montgomery – \$99

- April 1-2, 6-9, 12, 20-21, 29
- May 3-6, 10-14, 17-19, 24, 27-28, 31
- June 1-2, 10

RSA Spa Package – \$179

Ask for code – LOCD Includes Deluxe Room

- April 12
- May 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 • June – Sorry, no dates available

Rates available the 1st of the month
and are not applicable to groups.

Code: RABM, 800-228-9290

Internet promo code: R2A on marriott.com

Book Online and Save RSA \$4.

Proud To Be An Alabamian

Source: *Montgomery Advertiser*
www.catalogueforphilanthropy.org

Alabamians traditionally have been a giving people, with their state often ranking among the more generous states based on a percentage of income donated to charity.

“Alabama is one of the nation’s poorer states by a number of metrics,” the website states. “The average income per taxpayer is the ninth lowest in the country, and the percentage of people living in poverty is the sixth highest. Despite this, residents of the state are very generous, and charitable donations per taxpayer are the seventh highest in the country. ■

Most corporate leaders claim they want a simplified, reduced tax rate without loopholes. But a quick glance at how they spend their lobbying dollars suggests that this is hokey.

Corporations and interest groups that lobbied in favor of loopholes, tax breaks and other benefits in 2010.



1,885

Corporations that lobbied in favor of a simplified, reduced tax plan in 2010.

Source: It's the Economy

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