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RSA Legislative Update

BY NEAH MITCHELL, LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL

The 2014 Regular Legislative Session is moving quickly with little controversial legislation and very little legislation introduced affecting the ERS, TRS, or PEEHIP.

One bill that would impact ERS retirees is SB267, introduced by Sen. Del Marsh. This bill proposes a one-time, \$2 per service month bonus to be paid to all state employees who have retired on or prior to October 1, 2013, and all beneficiaries of retirees who currently receive benefits. Local units may provide the one-time bonus upon resolution of the local governing body. **This bill does not apply to TRS retirees.**

In addition, two bills have been introduced which propose constitutional amendments to allow public county officials to participate in the ERS. HB243, introduced by Rep. Mac Buttram, would allow certain Cullman County officials to participate; and HB417, introduced by Rep. Joe Faust, would allow Baldwin County mayors to participate. HB243 received a favorable report from the State Government Committee. ●

Economic Impact of the RTJ Golf Trail

Oxmoor Valley and Ross Bridge in Birmingham/Hoover

BY DR. MARK FAGAN; DEPARTMENT HEAD EMERITUS; JACKSONVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY

The RSA began investing in The Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail in Alabama in 1990. This investment has been instrumental for significant economic development in Jefferson County. Below is a general summary of the economic impact of these two Trail sites.

OXMOOR VALLEY

The 54-hole RTJ Golf Trail site at Oxmoor Valley in Birmingham was begun in 1990 on 650 acres of land donated by United States Steel and financed by the RSA. It has been one of the main ingredients of a public-private effort for economic development in the West Birmingham area. US Steel has worked to develop the land surrounding the golf complex into residential, commercial, and industrial property. The city of Birmingham and Jefferson

RTJ & LPGA

BY DAVID G. BRONNER

In the harsh, economic difficult time since our generation's "Great Depression" of 2008-2009, it has been difficult to keep alive the very positive world-wide attention that has been given Alabama with the LPGA partnership. Last month, we had exceptionally great news for our Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail and all of Alabama. We have confirmed two outstanding title sponsors for the Prattville/Montgomery event and the Mobile event. A very special "thank you" to Mayor Todd Strange of Montgomery, whose dedication to the River Region made the Yokohama LPGA Classic a reality.



The RTJ Golf Trail was built to help expand tourism, recruit industry and attract retirees, thus strengthening the state's economy while adding to the quality of life for all Alabamians. The RTJ Golf Trail opened in 1992 and celebrated its 10 millionth round on October 23, 2013. From Mobile Bay to the Tennessee River, the RTJ Golf Trail has 26 courses on 11 sites across Alabama. In 2012, the economic impact of both the LPGA events in Mobile and Prattville exceeded \$30 million.

"In a short time, Alabama went from not being a golf state to becoming a destination that attracts some of the best tournaments and lots of fans. The substantial economic impact is important to our tourism industry," said Director of Alabama Tourism Lee Sentell.

MOBILE

The tournament will be known as "The Airbus Mobile Bay LPGA Classic" and will be held May 22-25, 2014, at RTJ Magnolia Grove in Mobile.

"Mobile has a strong legacy of hosting the best women's golfers in the world," said John Cannon, president of the RTJ Golf Trail. "With Airbus as the new title sponsor, this tournament will be an even larger international event. Not only will we get to see some of the world's best athletes compete, but the international exposure and economic impact are tremendous. With the Airbus LPGA Classic on the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail in 2014, the eyes of the international golf community will

Economic Impact of the RTJ Golf Trail

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County worked to provide access roads and utilities.

Approximately 575 houses have been constructed adjacent to the Oxmoor Valley golf complex on roads that were developed from the extension of Lakeshore Parkway. These houses have an average value of \$205,000 resulting in \$117,875,000 in residential real estate value. Using a conservative multiplier of two, the construction for the residences, golf complex/clubhouse, and access roads had an economic impact of approximately \$300 million from 1990-2013.

These 575 households have a median annual income of \$76,061 which means almost \$44 million per year in income. The spending by visitors and residents of this development has provided a substantial amount of tax revenue for Birmingham, Hoover, and Bessemer and contributed to commercial growth in the nearby area. The success of this development led to a partnership by RSA/SunBelt Golf, USS Realty, Daniel Corporation, and Hoover for the development of Ross Bridge.

ROSS BRIDGE

Ross Bridge was begun in 2002 and is a 2,700-acre master-planned, mixed-use resort town built around the \$100 million Renaissance Birmingham Ross Bridge Golf Resort & Spa. It is home to the 18-hole Ross Bridge golf course which was the 11th site to open on The RTJ Golf Trail. It is located west of Shades Mountain in Hoover and is less than two miles from Oxmoor Valley golf complex.

According to the Daniel Corporation, there were almost 1,200 single-family houses and 490 multi-family units completed at the end of 2013. These houses range in value from the \$200,000s to over \$1 million with an average value of

\$375,000 and a total value of \$450 million. The cost of the 490 apartments was \$36 million. There is also 35,000 square feet of commercial space in the village with a cost of \$5 million. Using the multiplier of two, the construction of the residences/village, hotel/spa/conference center, golf course, and access roads had an economic impact of \$1.3 billion from 2002-2013.



These 1,700 new households have an estimated annual income of \$85,000 which totals \$150 million. The spending by these residents has supported commercial growth in the area and produced tax revenue. The spending by visitors to the golf course and hotel, spa, restaurants, bars has created sales and lodging taxes.

TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT OF OXMOOR VALLEY AND ROSS BRIDGE

There were 2,265 new residential units near the two RTJ Golf Trail sites at the end of 2013. This construction of the residences, access roads, hotel/spa, and golf complexes had an estimated economic impact of \$1.6 billion between 1990 and 2013.

Annual income from the 2,265 new households is approximately \$200 million. The spending on the infrastructure, 72-golf holes, clubhouse, hotel/spa and conference center, residences, commercial space, and industrial space in Oxmoor Valley generated jobs and

revenue for the state, county, and local municipalities. The annual spending by the visitors to the golf complexes, hotel/spa/conference center, bars, and restaurants combined with the spending of the new residents has created substantial demand for goods and services resulting in commercial development and significant revenue.

US Steel could have eventually developed their property near Shannon on their own. However, the RSA cemented partnerships with corporations and local governments by funding the two golf complexes and hotel/spa/conference center which gave impetus for the subsequent residential, commercial, and industrial development. The RSA promoted these golf complexes and hotel with free publicity from RSA-owned television

stations and newspapers along with marketing and public relations efforts by SunBelt Golf and PCH Resorts. RSA's involvement provided an important catalyst for the successful economic development in this part of Jefferson County.

The partnership initiated at Ross Bridge led to another development near Birmingham. The Shops at Grand River opened in October 26, 2010, and is a joint venture between Daniel Corporation and USS with financing by the RSA. The \$127 million retail center, near Leeds off exit 140 on Interstate 20, has 68 retailers and restaurants in phase one in 330,000 square feet. There is an estimated annual impact of \$85 million from this center. Phase two will have 160,000 square feet.

These shops will serve as an anchor for a 6,500-acre planned community. An annexation and infrastructure deal was made with Leeds. There will be residences, offices, industry, apartments, education, and recreation. There are entitlements for more than 2,000 houses that will develop over the next 15-20 years. ●

be on America's original golf trail."

"Without a doubt, the past few years have been very exciting for Mobile. The announcement that Airbus would be assembling A320 Family aircraft in its first U.S.-based production line in Mobile capped a long campaign that brought the community, elected officials and business together and put Mobile on the international stage within the aviation community. Now, Airbus is proud to combine its name with another event which puts Mobile on the international stage in another arena: ladies professional golf," said Allan McArtor, Chairman of Airbus Americas and, effective March 1, Chairman and CEO of Airbus Group Inc.

PRATTVILLE/MONTGOMERY

The 2014 tournament – **"The Yokohama Tire LPGA Classic"** – will be

conducted September 18-21 on the Senator Course at Capitol Hill along the RTJ Golf Trail, which consists of 26 courses on 11 sites stretched across Alabama.

"This is an opportunity for Yokohama to get our brand in front of a new audience," said Andrew Briggs, YTC director, marketing and product planning. "The LPGA and RTJ Golf Trail are world-class organizations. We'll work directly with them to maximize our agreement, incorporating dealer and consumer activities throughout the year to further promote our full line of tires."

Briggs said the LPGA sponsorship fits into Yokohama's expanding sports marketing program, which includes partnerships with the National Basketball Association's Los Angeles Clippers; the National Football League's Indianapolis Colts and Baltimore Ravens; and Major

League Baseball's Los Angeles Angels and New York Yankees.

"We are honored and excited to welcome Yokohama to the LPGA family," said LPGA Commissioner Make Whan. "The River Region and RTJ Trail are fantastic hosts, and now together with Yokohama, we're excited to bring the world's best female golfers back to Prattville."

RTJ Trail's president John Cannon stated: "With Yokohama as the new title sponsor, this tournament will be an even larger international event. Yokohama brings its global presence to showcase some of the premier women golfers from around the world. All eyes of the international golf community will be on America's original golf trail." ●

Visit National Village in Auburn/Opelika

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Alabama: The sixth poorest state in America

BY CHARLES J. DEAN | CDEAN@AL.COM

In his State of the State address to legislators Gov. Bentley said this: "Everyone in this room knows Alabama is one of the poorest states in America, where one in four children live in poverty. Nearly one million of our fellow Alabamians are dependent on Food Stamps."

The governor went on to call the statistics of poverty sobering. And indeed they are when you begin to look at the numbers county by county. Poverty both connects and disconnects swathes of Alabamians from each other....

According to the latest available information on the subject, Alabama is the sixth poorest state in America. Nineteen percent of adults in Alabama live below the poverty line and 28 percent of children live below that same line. But as high as those numbers are, they are a distant dream in some counties of Alabama where the poverty rate is almost double that percentage. Cases in point, the following seven counties are the poorest in Alabama: Wilcox, 39.9 percent; Sumter, 39.1 percent; Dallas, 35.7 percent; Greene, 35.1 percent; Perry, 33 percent; Bullock, 32.8 percent; Macon, 30.9 percent. Said another way, almost four in 10 adults in Wilcox and Sumter counties live in poverty.

Even in the seven counties with the lowest rates of poverty, six of them have double-digit poverty rates. Those seven counties include: Shelby, 8.1 percent; Baldwin, 13.4 percent; Elmore, 13.8 percent; Madison, 13.8 percent; Limestone, 13.9 percent; Blount, 14.9 percent; Autauga, 14.9 percent.

The state's most populous county, Jefferson, with the greatest number of jobs in the state, has a poverty rate of 18.7 percent. Mobile County, which in recent years has attracted high-profile jobs in ship building and aircraft manufacturing, still has a poverty rate of 19.7 percent. And Montgomery County, home to the state capital and government has a poverty rate of 23.2 percent.

Not surprisingly, the less education an Alabamian has the more likely they are to live in poverty. Among those with no high school diploma, almost 27 percent are living below the poverty line. Those with a high school or GED have 14.6 poverty rates. Only 3.6 percent of those with college degrees are in poverty in Alabama, slightly less than the national average of 3.9 percent.

Broken down by race, 30.6 percent of blacks are in poverty, 31.2 percent of Hispanics, and 12.4 percent of whites.... ●

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Includes: Deluxe Room, One Round of Golf for Two People.
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- May 4-5, 7-8, 11-15, 25-28

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- May 4-5, 9, 11, 26-27

Renaissance Ross Bridge – Hoover – \$109

- March 1-3, 6-9, 12, 14-16, 18-31
- April 1-3, 6-8, 13-17, 20-23, 27-30
- May 1, 14-15, 18, 26-31

* Memorial Day Weekend, May 23-25, requires a 3 night stay; early departures will result in a rate change to \$259 plus tax per night.

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- March 2-3, 8-11, 15, 20, 23-25, 28-31
- April 2-4, 9, 13-15, 19-21, 27-29
- May 4-5, 11, 15, 18-20, 25-27

Renaissance Montgomery – \$109

- March 1-2, 8-10, 14-20, 26-30
- April 6-7, 10-14, 17-19, 23, 26-29 • May 4-8, 11, 18-31

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ERS Board Seeks Candidates for Upcoming Election

Candidates are being sought for the **Active State Position No. 1**, **Active Local Position No. 1**, and **Retired Local Position** of the ERS Board of Control. The active positions are four-year terms beginning October 1, 2014, and are held by Steve Walkley and Steve Williams, respectively. The Retired Local position is a three-year term beginning October 1, 2014, currently held by James Fibbe. The election will take place this May.

The nominee for the Active State Position No. 1 must be an active vested member of the ERS by virtue of employment with a state agency. The nominee for Active Local Position No. 1 must be an active member of the ERS by virtue of employment with a local agency (city, county, town, public or quasi-public agency). The nominee for the Retired Local position must be a retired employee of a local agency (city, county, town, public or quasi-public agency) that participates in the ERS.

Nomination packets are available at www.rsa-al.gov or by contacting the election coordinator at 334.517.7192 or 877.517.0020. The completed packet must be returned to the ERS office by 4:00 p.m., April 15, 2014. ●

TRS Runoff Election Results

In the Runoff Election for the TRS Board of Control: Congratulations to Joe Ward who has been elected to the Retired Position, No. 1, and will begin a three-year term on July 1, 2014. ●



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