



The ADVISOR

TEACHERS, EMPLOYEES, and JUDICIAL



Vol. XLVI—No. 10

SERVING OVER 370,000 MEMBERS

April 2021

Expanding Medicaid: If Not Now— It Will Never Happen

EDITORIAL

In 2014, Alabama missed the chance to expand the Medicaid program when the federal government was picking up the tab. Now, Alabama has a second chance. The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 would provide states that expand Medicaid an extra incentive by matching an additional 5% of the total Medicaid spends. For Alabama, this could mean an additional \$940 million over two years according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

This is a chance to provide healthcare to low-income adults who cannot otherwise afford it, with the added benefit of providing much needed support to struggling rural hospitals. Alabama will receive an additional \$4 billion in total funding from the federal government. Governor Ivey has stated that she is open to discussing this issue. I urge her to take advantage of this golden opportunity. If we cannot help these 300,000 Alabamians in this rare circumstance, we will never improve our state. ●

Deadline for Local Tier Resolutions

BY WILLIAM F. KELLEY, JR.

At this time, 427 local agencies of the Employees' Retirement System (ERS) have passed resolutions to provide Tier I benefits to their Tier II employees. These agencies employ approximately 19,000 Tier II employees. The remaining local agencies that have not yet elected to provide these enhanced benefits employ approximately 12,000 Tier II members.

It is not too late for the remaining local employers to adopt the provisions of Act 2019-132 and provide these benefits to their employees as well. Many employers see this as a way to attract and maintain quality employees.

The act does have a deadline that is fast approaching. The ERS must receive an employer's resolution to provide these benefits by **May 8, 2021**. We do not have any authority to extend the deadline beyond this date. We urge any local employers who are interested in adopting these benefits to please do so as soon as possible. ●



Let Our People Vote

BY DAVID G. BRONNER

We are more than halfway through the 2021 Regular Legislative Session. Several important RSA-related bills have progressed through the Legislature, including the Tier II modification bills and a bill to increase local representation on the ERS Board. In addition, historic budgets, along with pay raises for state and education employees, have passed out of each house.

One of the most important pieces of legislation, in my opinion, is the comprehensive gambling legislation, brought by Sen. Del Marsh (R-Anniston), and supported by the report from the Governor's Study Group on Gambling Policy. The bill would allow the people of the state of Alabama to vote to allow a lottery, limited casino gambling, sports betting, and a gaming compact with the Poarch Band of Creek Indians. The bill fell two votes short of the necessary votes for passage in the Senate. After the failed vote, bills to allow just a lottery have been introduced in the Senate.

You might be wondering, why should I care? None of the proceeds from gambling were going to help fund my retirement, health insurance, or salary. Even though the proceeds would not directly benefit RSA members, there would be a number of indirect benefits. The revenue would have gone to improve basic functions of the state, such as broadband, rural healthcare services, mental health services, and postsecondary scholarships. Not only would this be to the betterment of the state as a whole, this would alleviate some of the burden on the budgets, potentially freeing up revenue to fund bonuses or accommodate insurance or retirement increases when needed.

A lottery bill, on its own, is not enough. Sen. Marsh's bill should be brought back up, but not without additional support from you! Contact your local state senator and let him or her know how important this bill is to the state and to you. Alabama loves the past, but it is time to move our beloved state forward, and money is necessary to accomplish that task. Alabama clearly deserves much better than the bottom in too many essential programs in the future. Let our people vote on a comprehensive solution, not half of a solution to a long-term gambling problem. ●

Beware New Social Security Scam

BY SUSAN TOMPOR, USA TODAY

So you just got a text from Social Security and the guy even tried to reassure you that he's the real deal by texting you a picture of his badge.

Should you feel that things are on the up-and-up and respond?

The scammers who are out to steal your Social Security number and your money now have a new game going. They're not just spoofing phone numbers out of Washington. They're now impersonating someone from Social Security by sending photos of government badges.

The crooks have created fake versions

of ID badges that many federal employees use to gain access to federal buildings.

"The scammers play on emotion, generally fear, to get the people to act without thinking," said Social Security Administration Commissioner Andrew Saul.

He said it's essential that people simply hang up and not even engage with the caller. Don't let anyone threaten you or harass you into thinking that your Social Security number is connected to criminal investigation.

Social Security isn't going to call you to threaten your benefits or tell you to

wire money, send cash, or put money on gift cards. But scammers make such calls every hour on the hour.

CVS shoppers might have even heard in-store announcements lately from the Social Security Administration to warn them about such scams.

Walmart and Home Depot participated in the latest awareness campaign, too. You don't want to buy a gift card—and then read off the card number to someone on the phone who claims to be from law enforcement or Social Security.... ●

The Colony at the Grand Wins National Award

THE ANNUAL HONORS RECOGNIZE EXCELLENCE IN NEW HOME SALES, MARKETING, AND DESIGN

NAHB's National Sales and Marketing Council (NSMC)

has announced the 2021 Gold Award Winners for The Nationals new home sales and marketing awards honoring the best in the building industry for their determination, integrity, and creativity. The Colony at the Grand in Fairhope won top honors for Best Single Family Detached Model Home 2,000 to 2,500 sf for its 2020 Showhome for the Baldwin County Home Builders Parade of Homes beating out Silver level communities in Canada, Illinois, Kentucky, Delaware, and South Carolina.

"The Nationals are the most prestigious awards of their kind, setting the benchmark for innovation in new home design, marketing, and sales," said Angela Harris, chairperson of The Nationals. "NAHB's commitment to recognizing originality, imagination, and success has been exemplified by its award winners since the competition's inception."

A diverse panel of industry



professionals from across the country selected Gold Award winners from more than 900 entries. With 61 categories across various disciplines of the new home industry, the awards honor excellence in product and community design, advertising, marketing, and sales achievements by individuals and sales teams.

The Colony at the Grand is a master-planned community with new homes

built by Stuart Construction and resort amenities for residents. At The Colony, nature is showcased everyday as it is situated near the historic grounds of the Grand Hotel Golf Resort & Spa, Auto-graph Collection in Point Clear and is at the heart of Mobile Bay's Eastern Shore. Sales and marketing is by The Colony at the Grand Realty. Learn more at colonyatthegrand.com. ●

Alabama Success Story Literacy Has a New Friend

SHORT the Squirrel is a literacy project for Alabama's children. The project is a non-profit founded in 2020 after McRae Young, a Mobile County Assistant District Attorney, saw young children spending large, unoccupied blocks of time in the courtroom. Her mother, Monica Anderson Young, and Dr. Dee Dupree Bennett created SHORT the Squirrel as a mechanism to fill the gap with "edutainment" and establishing SHORT as literacy's identifiable, lovable mascot for children.

SHORT the Squirrel's mission is to spread literacy-rich, community-oriented, enjoyable content to our youngest citizens. The booklet features a blend of entertainment and education for children ages 4-9 visiting Alabama's courtrooms. The children may be accompanying adults with court business or involved in cases affecting their futures. *SHORT in Court* guides children through a courtroom experience with a lovable character who promotes understanding and reduces trepidation.

According to the Alabama State Department of Education 2018-2019 test results, 53% of Alabama's 4th grade

students were not proficient in reading. As Alabama courtrooms do not allow electronics, SHORT the Squirrel fills a gap of time with activities encouraging literacy. Governor Kay Ivey has endorsed the SHORT the Squirrel program.



Around the time SHORT was being founded, the Alabama Literacy Act was established to increase reading levels across the state. Bennett, Young, and their team of volunteers look forward to using the Alabama Law Foundation grant to

deliver *SHORT in Court* to each Alabama county court system.

SHORT will release its first booklet, *SHORT in Court*, for all 67 Alabama counties to distribute in 2021. Grant committee member Brad Mendheim, Associate Justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, said, "The SHORT the Squirrel program is an innovative and outstanding program to encourage respect for the rule of law, as well as literacy, in Alabama's children. I am thankful for the Alabama Law Foundation's commitment and generosity in approving a grant for SHORT the Squirrel. I am looking forward to seeing the SHORT program in all of Alabama's courthouses."

For more information about becoming a sponsor or ordering books, please visit SHORTtheSquirrel.com or email contact@shortthesquirrel.com.

This is a series of articles about Alabama Success Stories. Please let us know if you have a similar success story you would like to share with the RSA membership. You may contact us at communication.correspondences@rsa-al.gov. ●

Golfweek's Best Courses in Alabama

BY JASON LUSK, GOLFWEEK

Mention golf in Alabama and most players' minds go directly to the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail.

That's completely understandable, as eight of the top 10 public-access courses in the Heart of Dixie are part of that famed collection.

Golfweek ranks courses by compiling the average ratings—on a points basis of 1 to 10—of its more than 750 raters to create several industry-leading lists of courses. That includes the popular Best Courses You Can Play list for courses that allow non-member tee times. These are generally defined as courses accessible to resort guests or regular daily-fee players. Pursell Farms is No. 1 on that list in Alabama.

After Pursell Farms in the top spot, the rest of the state's top five courses are part of the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail: No. 2 Grand National's Lake Course in Opelika, No. 3 Ross Bridge near Birmingham, No. 4 Capitol Hill's The Judge in Prattville, and No. 5 Oxmoor Valley's Ridge Course near Birmingham.

These courses share a common designer in Robert Trent Jones, Sr., as well as a common thread of general excellence—and, frequently, a back-tee length that should be avoided by anyone who doesn't pay a Tour caddie to carry the bag. Terrain varies from course to course, but any of these four make for an incredible golf experience,

especially dotted as they are with memorable par 3s.

Together, they make one of the best buddies trips in North America, stretching from Auburn across central Alabama to Montgomery and up to Birmingham. And with multiple courses at each facility—or in the case of Ross Bridge, five minutes down the road to Oxmoor Valley—there are plenty of opportunities to keep swinging for days. Add into the mix a variety of accommodations – from presidential suites to standard guest rooms to cabins and lodges—and it's easy to focus entirely on the Trail. ●

Start Planning Your Spring/Summer Getaways at RSA's Outstanding Hotels, Spas, and RTJ Golf



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- June 1-9, 12-14, 19-22, 25-30

The Battle House RSA Spa Package \$207

- April 5-7, 12-13, 19-21, 26-28
- May 5, 10-12, 24-26, 31
- June 1-3, 7-9, 14, 21-22, 28-30

Riverview Plaza \$109

- April 4-8, 11-12, 17, 25-29 • May 5-7, 9-13, 30-31
- June 1-3, 6-10, 13-15, 19-21

Grand Hotel \$127 plus a 15% resort fee

- April 1, 4-8, 11-15, 18-22, 25-28
- May 2-6, 9-13, 16, 19-20, 26-27, 31 • June 1, 6-7

Grand Hotel RSA Golf Package \$199 plus a 15% resort fee

- April 1, 4-8, 11-15, 18-22, 25-28
- May 2-6, 9-13, 16, 19-20, 26-27, 31 • June 1, 6-7

Grand Hotel RSA Spa Package \$259 plus a 15% resort fee

- April 1, 7-8, 14-15, 21-22, 28
- May 5-6, 12-13, 19-20, 26-27 • June 1, 6-7

Marriott Shoals \$109

- April 4, 11, 18, 25 • May 2, 9, 16, 23
- June 6, 13, 20, 27

Marriott Shoals RSA Spa Package \$210

- April 4, 11, 18, 25 • May 2, 9, 16, 23
- June 6, 13, 20, 27

Renaissance Ross Bridge \$119

- April 1-8, 11-15, 18-22, 25-29
- May 2-6, 9-13, 16-19, 23-24
- June 1-3, 6-10, 13-17, 20-24, 27-30

Renaissance Ross Bridge RSA Spa Package \$223

- April 4-7, 11-14, 18-21, 25-28
- May 2-5, 9-12, 16-19, 23-24
- June 1-2, 6-9, 13-16, 20-23, 27-30

Auburn/Opelika Marriott Resort \$109

- April 1-8, 11-15, 18-22
- May 3-6, 9-13, 16-17, 23-27, 30-31
- June 1-3, 6-10, 13-17, 20-24, 27-30

Auburn/Opelika Marriott Resort RSA Spa Package \$201

- April 1, 11, 14-15, 18, 21-22
- May 5-6, 9, 12-13, 16, 23, 26-27, 30
- June 2-3, 6, 9-10, 13, 16-17, 20, 23-24, 27, 30

Prattville Marriott \$89

- April 1-8, 13, 15, 25 • May 2-4, 16, 21-22, 31
- June 1, 6-7, 16, 20-21, 23, 25-30

Renaissance Montgomery \$119

- April 1-4, 11, 16-20, 25-30 • May 2-8, 11-13, 16, 30-31
- June 6-7, 20-24, 27-30

Renaissance Montgomery RSA Spa Package \$223

- April 1-3, 16-17, 20, 27-30 • May 4-6, 11-13
- June 22-24, 27-30

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