

A Debbie Downer – Always Opposed With No Solutions

BY DAVID G. BRONNER

There is nothing wrong with being conservative or liberal on specific issues. Everyone is entitled to their political opinion, but we should all agree that we want the best for the state of Alabama and its people.

A handful of conservative organizations, like **ALFA, Alabama Policy Institute, 1819 News, and Eagle Forum**, make a habit of being argumentative about everything. That is perfectly fine, but **for Alabama to improve, it needs these very smart conservatives to push forward some reasonable solutions to our problems.**

Alabama has old problems, such as overcrowded prisons, underfunded State Troopers and mental health systems, and underperforming schools. Now we have new problems, like failing hospitals and overcrowded interstates. We need to continue funding workforce development efforts, while funding increases are needed for retirement and health-care benefits.

The influx of federal monies after COVID helped to address some of these

old problems, mainly through funding new programs for public education and mental health and partially funding a new prison. However, these federal monies are going away, as are some of the large budget surpluses the state has enjoyed over the past few years.

Alabamians have made it clear that they do not want new taxes despite Alabama having the 49th lowest taxes in the country! Only Alaska is lower. However, we are 100% surrounded by gambling in Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, and

Mississippi, who all enjoy OUR money for THEIR solutions to THEIR problems.

The 2025 legislative session is the time to do something! The session after will be an election year, which is not the time to take on difficult solutions. Gambling is anything but a perfect solution! Yet, attempting to do nothing is not solving our problems. The time to address old and new problems is now, and gambling can be the answer.

I have often repeated to you what my father said to me as a young man full of ideas. Dad would say, “Ideas without money—remain ideas!” ●



If Anyone Remembers

EDITORIAL

The RSA staff jumped up and down trying to get Alabamians and legislators to slow down on canceling existing taxes. (See the *Advisor* articles in March 2022, June 2022, May 2023, July 2023, and January 2024.) We were rolling in federal monies at the time. In 2022, 18 laws provided tax relief, with more in 2023 and 2024, including cuts for overtime and groceries.

It did not take long for the wheels to fall off. The tax cut on overtime wages was initially expected to reduce

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The Retirement Systems of Alabama				
Statement of Changes in Fiduciary Net Position – Unaudited For the Twelve Months Ended September 30, 2024 – in millions				
	Total RSA In Billions	TRS	ERS	JRF
ADDITIONS		In Millions		
Contributions				
Employee		\$616	\$357	\$5
Employer		1,066	669	23
Transfers In		9	6	-
Marketing & Advertising Revenue		1	-	-
Total Contributions	\$2.75	1,692	1,032	28
Investment Income				
Total Net Investment Income	8.72	5,712	2,936	69
Total Additions		7,404	3,968	97
DEDUCTIONS				
Retirement Allowance Payments		2,647	1,402	43
Return of Contributions and Death Benefits		74	59	-
Transfers Out		6	9	-
Administrative Expenses		29	15	1
Depreciation		9	4	-
Total Deductions	4.30	2,765	1,489	44
Net Increase	7.17	4,639	2,479	53
Net Position Restricted for Pension Benefits				
Beginning of Year	42.31	27,848	14,133	324
End of Year	\$49.48	\$32,487	\$16,612	\$377

Boost your savings with



RSA-1 Returns

PERIOD ENDING NOVEMBER 30, 2024

Annualized Investment Returns

Investment Options	1 Year	Last 3 Years	Last 5 Years	Last 10 Years
Short-Term Investment Portfolio	5.52%	4.04%	2.57%	-
Fixed Income Portfolio	7.06%	-0.59%	0.99%	2.18%
Equity Portfolio	33.86%	11.44%	15.76%	13.32%

The Retirement Systems of Alabama administers three separate investment options that are available to all RSA members. By state statute, there are **no fees charged** to those who elect to partic-

ipate. IF you are not currently deferring some of your pre-tax salary into these accounts, you may want to consider doing so. More information can be found at www.rsa-al.gov/rsa-1/. For any investment

option you choose, remember that past performance does NOT guarantee future performance. ●

U.S. Policy – 3 Largest Trading Partners

SOURCE: PIPER SANDLER

U.S. Trade in Goods with China, Mexico, and Canada (2023)

Country	U.S. Imports	U.S. Exports	Total Trade	U.S. Trade Deficit
Mexico	484,527	323,145	807,672	-161,382
Canada	427,287	354,958	782,245	-72,329
China	427,525	148,809	576,334	-278,716

Source: Census Bureau. In millions of dollars.

We are in the camp that President Trump will be neutral for the economy. We expect a tax bill that will be roughly fiscally neutral, and the DOGE will produce nothing like the outlandish promises being made by Musk and Ramaswamy. Curtailing the flow of illegal immigration is either a slight negative for potential GDP or neutral depending on your baseline. The bullish economic story for Trump is really based on the regulatory freeze and him unleashing

animal spirits. Will tariffs cause enough economic pain to offset the regulatory relief? Will the uncertainty associated with an unconstrained Trump tame those animal spirits?

We believe many investors are way too complacent about the risk of tariffs because they don't believe he will do anything that will threaten the stock market or do things they believe that would hurt the economy. We have always believed Trump's concerns about the stock

market have been exaggerated. Moreover, what most investors believe would be bad for the economy differs substantially with what Trump believes would hurt the economy.

Very little of the illegal drugs and immigration comes from Canada, so one has to wonder why Trump is **threatening 25% tariffs on our northern neighbor**. One possibility is bad blood between Trump and Trudeau.... ●

Make Your Vote Count! TRS Board of Control Election Information

Ballots for the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS) Board of Control regular election will be mailed by January 3, 2025, and must be returned to YesElections no later than 4:00 p.m., February 18, 2025. This election is for Teacher Position No. 1, held by Amanda Miller; Support Personnel Position No. 1, held by Susan Lockridge; Higher Education Position No. 1, held by Will Walsh; and Retired Position No. 1, held by Peggy Mobley. The elected members will begin their three-year term of service on July 1, 2025.

Elected members to the TRS/PEEHIP Board will only be elected by members from the same category of the retirement system. To be eligible to vote for the:

- **Teacher Position No. 1**, you must be an active member currently contributing to the TRS who actively instructs students in grades K-12.
- **Support Personnel Position No. 1**, you must be an active member currently contributing to the TRS and working as a maid, custodian, bus driver, lunchroom worker, cafeteria worker, secretary, clerk, clerical assistant, maintenance worker, or other non-certificated employee working an average of 20-hours-a-week. All active members who are not otherwise eligible to vote for another position (in this or any other election) shall be eligible to vote for the Support Personnel Position.

- **Higher Education Position No. 1**, you must be an active member currently contributing to the TRS who works in a public four-year institution of higher education.
- **Retired Position No. 1**, you must be a former active member of the TRS and on the TRS retirement payroll.

Eligible members can vote by mail, phone, or the internet. Instructions will be included with the paper ballot. More information about the candidates can be found at www.rsa-al.gov.

By submitting your vote, you are confirming that you are eligible to vote for the position based on your classification. If your classification is incorrect, please contact the Elections Coordinator at 334.517.7192 or 877.517.0020. ●

Alabama Success Story

Alabama Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA)

As we enter 2025, the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA) is gearing up to celebrate a significant milestone—ALEA’s official 10th Anniversary. Formed through the consolidation of twelve legacy agencies, ALEA has continuously used dynamic innovation to streamline law enforcement services while simultaneously enhancing resources enabling ALEA to better execute its mission of providing public safety to the citizens and visitors of Alabama. ALEA’s formation represented a pivotal moment in how law enforcement services are utilized within the state, fostering greater collaboration and efficiency in law enforcement operations.

ALEA is fully committed to keeping Alabama citizens safe, which requires both the recruitment and training of new law enforcement officers. On November 21, ALEA proudly graduated 21 Trooper Trainees from the Training Center in Selma. Twenty of the graduates will be assigned to the Highway Patrol Division and one to ALEA’s Marine Patrol Division. This influx of new Troopers is critical in bolstering ALEA’s ability to effectively address the diverse safety needs of Alabama’s communities. As ALEA continues to expand, so does its capacity to respond to emergencies and provide vital services across the state, exemplifying a dedicated workforce prepared to protect and serve.

Additionally, ALEA has fortified its effectiveness in combating crime by joining hands with local, state, and federal partners to form the Metro Area Crime Suppression (MACS) Unit. This initiative aims to tackle violent and organized

crime within the city of Montgomery and surrounding areas. The collaborative effort has already demonstrated promising results, with a noticeable decrease in crime rates linked to increased police presence and strategic interventions. The establishment of MACS has not only led to the removal of dangerous drugs and firearms from communities but has also strengthened relationships between law enforcement officers and citizens, fostering trust and cooperation.

As of November 21, the MACS Unit had conducted 1,800 traffic stops, served 466 arrest warrants, which range from Failure to Appear for traffic offenses to Capital Murder, arrested 183 individuals on various charges (14 were juveniles), recovered 31 stolen vehicles, and had made 37 drug seizures to include a significant amount of Fentanyl. The unit had also seized a total of 143 firearms, with 28 of those equipped with machine gun conversion devices, commonly known on the street as “switches.” One ongoing investigation led the MACS Unit to a residence where a federal search warrant was executed. During the warrant, 75 manufactured machine gun conversion devices along with the manufacturing equipment were seized.

ALEA recognizes that effective law enforcement goes beyond mere crime suppression; it is about building enduring community bonds.

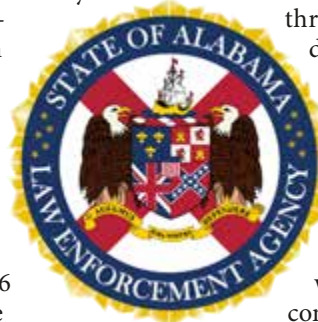
In light of the tragic school shooting in Winder, Georgia, that resonated deeply

with many Alabama residents, ALEA took significant steps to address school safety concerns in local communities. Responding to the outcry for increased security, ALEA ramped up patrols around schools throughout the state. This proactive measure aims not only to deter potential

threats but also to provide students, parents, and staff with reassurance regarding their safety. These enhanced patrols will continue throughout the school year, underscoring ALEA’s commitment to fostering a safe learning environment while further strengthening community relationships.

As ALEA prepares for its upcoming anniversary, it reflects on its achievements and looks forward to the future. With a dedicated workforce, effective crime-fighting initiatives, and a commitment to community engagement, ALEA stands ready to serve and protect the people of Alabama. ALEA’s continued progress in law enforcement is a testament to its resilience, innovation, and dedication to public safety. As Alabama moves forward, ALEA remains committed to adapting and evolving to meet the ever-changing needs of the great state of Alabama.

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.



PROJECTED STATE COSTS FOR 2025–26

Projected Retirement Employer Cost Retirement Systems of Alabama (Amounts in millions)

Retirement	Actual 2023-2024	Estimated 2024-2025	Requested 2025-2026
Teachers’ (TRS)	\$1,058	\$1,191	\$1,306#
Employees’ Regular-State (ERS)	300	319	343*
Judicial (JRF)	23	27	28
Total Retirement Cost	\$1,381	\$1,537	\$1,677

Projected Insurance Employer Cost Retirement Systems of Alabama (Amounts in millions)

Insurance	Actual 2023-2024	Estimated 2024-2025	Requested 2025-2026
PEEHIP (Teachers)	\$1,005	\$1,005	\$1,129&
SEHIP (State Employees)	372	381	381
Total Insurance Cost	\$1,377	\$1,386	\$1,510

Estimated \$777.85M from Education Trust Fund

* Estimated \$85.00M from General Fund

& Estimated \$814.80M from Education Trust Fund

Note: PEEHIP numbers exclude amounts from Universities for retiree costs

Note: FY2026 estimated cost for PEEHIP totals \$1.77 billion

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• January 2-13, 19-24
• February 2-4, 8-10, 16-18, 23-25
• March 5-7, 9-11, 16-18, 29-31

The Battle House RSA Spa Package \$244
• January 6-8, 13, 20-22
• February 3-4, 10, 17-18, 24-25
• March 5, 10-11, 17-18, 31

Riverview Plaza \$119
• January 2-13, 15-17
• February 2-4, 8-10, 16-18, 23-25
• March 5-13, 30-31

Grand Hotel \$137 (plus a 15% resort fee)
• January 5-8, 12-13 • February 2-3, 9-12
• March 4-5, 12-13, 23-24

Grand Hotel RSA Golf Package \$209 (plus a 15% resort fee)
• January 5-8, 12-13 • February 2-3, 9-12
• March 4-5, 12-13, 23-24

**Grand Hotel RSA Spa Package \$285
(plus a 15% resort fee)**
• January 5-8, 12-13 • February 2-3, 9-12
• March 4-5, 12-13, 23-24

Marriott Shoals \$119
• January 1-12, 15-16, 19, 26-27
• February 2-3, 9-10, 16-17
• March 2-5, 9-10, 16, 23, 29-31

Marriott Shoals RSA Spa Package \$229
• January 2, 5, 9-12, 15-16, 19, 26
• February 2, 9, 16, 20 • March 2, 4, 16, 23, 29, 31

Renaissance Ross Bridge \$129
• January 1-17, 23-26, 31
• February 1-2, 5, 8-9, 16-17, 27
• March 2, 5-6, 12-13, 23, 30-31

Renaissance Ross Bridge RSA Spa Package \$260
• January 8-9 • February 5, 27 • March 5, 12

**Auburn/Opelika Marriott Resort \$119
(plus a 10% resort fee) Web reservation will show
\$144, including \$25 resort fee. Guest will only be
charged RSA rate at checkout.**
• January 1-6, 12-16 • February 2-4, 9-11, 17-19
• March 16-19, 23-24, 30-31

**Auburn/Opelika Marriott Resort RSA Spa Package
\$234 (plus a 10% resort fee)**
• January 1-2, 5-6, 12-16 • February 2-3, 9-10, 17-19
• March 16, 19, 23, 30

Prattville Marriott \$109
• January 1, 5-14, 18-19, 24-26, 29, 31
• February 1-3, 7-9, 23, 25-26
• March 2-3, 23-24, 30-31

Renaissance Montgomery \$129
• January 1-6, 8-9, 24-25
• February 2-3, 14-15, 21-23
• March 23-26, 29-30

Renaissance Montgomery RSA Spa Package \$244
• January 1-4, 8-9, 24-25 • February 21-22
• March 25-26, 29

*Proof of membership may be required.
Rates available the 1st of the month and
are not applicable to groups.*

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If Anyone Remembers

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revenues to the Education Trust Fund by about \$34 million, but instead, it cost \$230 million for **only** the first nine months of the year. Senator Arthur Orr, who we named our hero after his efforts in the 2023 session to slow down additional tax cuts, had attempted to place a cap on the overtime tax cut as a safeguard, **but** the cap was ultimately removed.

Getting the facts before jumping into the fire can clearly save pain and suffering for Alabama! ●

ERS Board Member Sworn in at December Meeting

ERS Board of Control Vice Chair Jim Fibbe administers the Oath of Office to Norris Green, Retired State Employee. ●



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