



# The ADVISOR

TEACHERS, EMPLOYEES, and JUDICIAL



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SERVING OVER 370,000 MEMBERS

March 2021

## The 100 Best Spas in the Americas – 2020

BY SPASOFAMERICA.COM

ALABAMA: RSA HAS 3 OF TOP 30



While North American travelers haven't been able to travel as much as they would like in 2020, we hope that the following list of best spas will inspire your trips to come — whenever that may be.

The Top 100 Spas of 2020 list includes 74 spas from the United States and 26 spas from North and Central America. Three Alabama spas are listed in the top 30:

- #4. The Spa at Ross Bridge, Hoover, AL
- #11. Spa at Grand National, Opelika, AL
- #30. The Spa at The Shoals, Florence, AL

*(Editor's Note: Grand Hotel Golf Resort & Spa, Autograph Collection was closed due to two hurricanes.)* ●



## Retirees Are Asking

BY DAVID G. BRONNER

With Governor Kay Ivey's budgets now in the hands of the Alabama Legislature, retired teachers and state employees across Alabama are asking their state senators and representatives, "What about us?!"

It is extremely difficult for 100,000+ retired TRS members and 54,000+ retired ERS members who gave their working lives to serve the people of Alabama to hear that we need \$3.6 billion for the housing of prisoners when the last Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) was given in 2006. In addition, inflation on top of everything else is eating up their pension!

Retirees need to remember that since 2006, legislators have given a bonus check in 2008, 2009, 2015, and 2018. We also understand Alabama prisons have been ignored for over 50 years, and its resolution is essential to the future of Alabama.

Informed citizens of Alabama know our Legislature has their hands full. Last year's problems, like business incentives, gambling, prisons, rural broadband expansion, and many others, added to this year's problems associated with the pandemic, like business liability protections and tax relief for COVID-19 stimulus monies, will make for a difficult session for the legislators.

We are told that the governor's proposed Education Trust Fund Budget for fiscal year 2022 totals \$7.6 billion, an increase of \$440 million from the current year. The governor's proposed General Fund Budget (state government) is \$2.4 billion, a decrease of \$3 million from the current year. Lest you forget, the federal government also gave Alabama an additional \$1.9 billion in "CARES Funding" for all the problems associated with the pandemic.

Knowing that, the question of "what about us?" deserves an answer. Clearly the retirees of Alabama should be shown reasonable consideration for the decades of service provided to the people of Alabama. Funding a meaningful retiree COLA may not be in the cards (a small 1% COLA would cost \$234 million), but a bonus check could be realistic and meaningful for retirees living on a fixed income. ●

## U.S. News Ranks Alabama's Top Hotels

BY SEAN ROSS, *YELLOWHAMMER NEWS*



Renaissance Ross Bridge in Hoover

**U**.S. News & World Report this week released its rankings of the top 25 hotels in Alabama, and the biggest winner was the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail. The rankings are based on an analysis of travel experts and user opinions, per *U.S. News*.

Alabama's top five hotels were as follows:

1. Battle House Renaissance Mobile Hotel & Spa – Mobile
2. Grand Hotel Golf Resort & Spa – Point Clear
3. Grand Bohemian Hotel – Mountain Brook
4. Marriott Shoals Hotel & Spa – Florence
5. Fort Conde Inn — Mobile

The Battle House, Grand Hotel, and Marriott Shoals are along the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail, as are the Renaissance Birmingham Ross Bridge Golf Resort & Spa (ranked No. 8) in Hoover, Renaissance Mobile Riverview Plaza Hotel (No. 12), Renaissance Montgomery Hotel & Spa at the Convention Center (No. 13), and Auburn Marriott Opelika Hotel & Conference Center at Grand National (No. 14)... ●

## Annual Report Available

Call 334.517.7000 or 877.517.0020, or

write: Annual Report, P.O. Box 302150,

Montgomery, AL 36130-2150

## Capitol Hill on The RTJ Golf Trail

BY MARK FAGAN

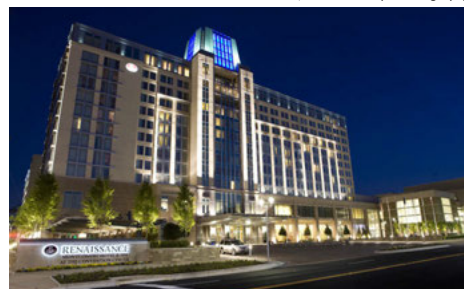
**C**apitol Hill in Prattville opened with 54 holes in May 1999 as the 8th site on the Trail. It is located at exit 179 on I-65, 10 miles north of Montgomery. The site has dramatic elevation changes overlooking the Alabama River and Cooter's Pond, with stunning views of downtown Montgomery. The RSA owns two hotels that serve visitors to this site. The RSA purchased the Montgomery Marriott Prattville Hotel & Conference Center at Capitol Hill on the site (from the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama) in 2002 and developed (with the city of Montgomery) the Renaissance Montgomery Hotel & Spa at the Convention Center in 2008.

In February 1997, business and government leaders from Prattville, Montgomery, Millbrook, Autauga County, and Elmore County organized to persuade the RSA to build a golf complex in Prattville. In November 1997, Prattville agreed to convey 674 acres to the RSA, assist in a lease of 271 acres from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE), and construct the access road for the site on the Trail. The COE property had 150 acres of hardwood bottom near the Alabama River. Union Camp donated 330 acres along the Alabama River to mitigate the COE land used for the golf courses to secure the lease and respond to environmental concerns over tree loss. Prattville financed \$6 million for the project to be repaid with increased tax revenue.

The golf complex has spiraling wooden cart paths and high bridges for traversing the high bluff to the water features on the courses. There are three distinct 18-hole championship courses (The Judge, The Senator, and The Legislator). The Senator (a Scottish-Links style course) was built on a cotton field and has no trees but high mounding separating holes, tall fescue rough, and 193 pot bunkers. The Legislator winds up and down the bluff through trees with mosses and vines and a cypress swamp. The Judge plays around 200 acres of backwater and one constructed lake with the opening hole dropping 200 feet. The clubhouse has 52,417 sf (the Trail's largest) including an 8,400 sf wrap around porch (with a view of downtown Montgomery), pro shop, bar/restaurant, locker rooms, and meeting rooms. There is a



Judge Course, Hole #1, Capitol Hill – Michael Clemmer, Golf Landscape Photography



Renaissance Montgomery Hotel & Spa at the Convention Center



Clubhouse, Capitol Hill



Montgomery Marriott Prattville Hotel & Conference Center at Capitol Hill

360-degree practice range, short game area, and Golf Academy building.

The Montgomery Marriott Prattville Hotel & Conference Center at Capitol Hill has 94 main guest rooms, two 8-room villas, a 10,000 sf executive cottage with five suites, and a private helipad. There is a restaurant, event space, and a Grand Ballroom. The RSA partnered with Prattville to add the conference center. The Renaissance Montgomery Hotel & Spa at the Convention Center has a performing arts center (1,800-seat MPAC), 133,000 sf of event space, 346 guest rooms, two restaurants, and outdoor bar. The MPAC is a level one theater that can accommodate Broadway shows and concerts. The

CONTINUED ON PAGE THREE

# Alabama Success Story

Despite criticisms, Alabama's environment is the best it's been since standards were first measured

BY LANCE LEFLEUR, DIRECTOR OF ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT (ADEM)

As the director of the state agency charged with safeguarding Alabama's environment, I have great respect for and deep appreciation of our state's wonderful natural resources and rich biodiversity of species and habitats, including many that are unique to Alabama. Protecting human health and those environmental treasures is precisely the reason the Alabama Department of Environmental Management exists.

By any environmental quality measure – fewer impaired waters, more waters classified or designated as high quality, exceptionally high-quality drinking water, air meeting all quality standards, extensive remediation of legacy soil contamination – the quality of the environment in Alabama is the best it's been since environmental quality was first measured. And it's getting even better.

For example, 82% of the rivers and streams that were listed in 1998 as impaired for any combination of pollutants have since been removed from the list. There are also well-documented significant reductions to pollution impairments of lakes, reservoirs, bays, and estuaries in Alabama.

Since 1982, the state has had 805 miles of rivers and streams classified as Outstanding National Resource Waters, 343 miles classified as Outstanding Alabama Waters, and 40,065 acres (Lake Martin) designated as a Treasured Alabama Lake. ADEM had a direct hand in those

achievements.

In 2019, less than 2% of the public drinking water systems in Alabama had any health-based water quality violations for the 89 contaminants monitored. Based on EPA data, only one state, Hawaii, had a lower number of violations than Alabama.

With air, Alabama has been in attainment with all National Ambient Air Quality Standards since 2015. Those standards cover particulate matter, ozone, nitrogen oxide, sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide, and lead. Over the past 30 years, releases of those contaminants have dropped by an average of 83%.

Since 1989, ADEM's land division has overseen the closure of all 141 unlined municipal solid waste landfills, the elimination of 1,880 unauthorized dumps, and the cleanup of 341 illegal tire dumps containing nearly 10 million scrap tires. State-wide waste reduction through recycling increased from 5% to 25%, and more than 11,000 leaking underground storage tanks were cleaned up.

In recent years, many endangered species have come under more protection and are less threatened than in the past. The bald eagle, osprey, beach mouse, gopher tortoise, salamanders, freshwater mussels,

crayfish, and darters are among them.

Can more be done, such as improved local land-use practices and citizen action, to add to the protections we already have in place? Of course. Good environmental stewardship and economic prosperity are not mutually exclusive.

But let us not ignore the fact that the



ADEM Testing Air Emissions

state of the environment in Alabama is among the best in the nation and getting better.

For more information, please visit ADEM's website at [adem.alabama.gov](http://adem.alabama.gov).

*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](mailto:communication.correspondences@rsa-al.gov).* ●

## Capitol Hill on The RTJ Golf Trail CONTINUED FROM PAGE TWO

city of Montgomery conveyed their Civic Center to the RSA and a portion of the funds for developing this hotel complex, MPAC, and 660-car parking deck. The old Civic Center was completely renovated with 20,000 sf of meeting space added. The city receives some revenue from the meeting spaces and parking deck plus tax revenue from the hotel/restaurants.

The number of motels, restaurants, retail outlets, and houses has increased significantly around the golf complex since it opened. The Renaissance

Montgomery Hotel & Spa at the Convention Center has served as the catalyst for increased development of restaurants, lodging, and revitalized housing in downtown. This golf complex was instrumental in locating Hyundai to Montgomery. The Ladies Professional Golfers Association (LPGA) has held five tournaments at Capitol Hill. There were 144 of the top women golfers from some 25 countries that came to Alabama each year to play in this tournament. Prattville and Montgomery were publicized all over the world through

reports of these players in the tournaments. The Golf Channel broadcasted each of these events around the world to tens of millions for two hours per day for four days.

To see a video of the current Capitol Hill golf complex, the Montgomery Marriott Prattville Hotel & Conference Center at Capitol Hill, and the Renaissance Montgomery Hotel & Spa at the Convention Center, please visit <https://youtu.be/owrsgQrOKOA>. ●

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



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FOR RSA MEMBERS

**The Battle House,**

**A Renaissance Hotel \$119**

- March 1, 7, 11-12, 17-18, 20-31
- April 1-8, 11-13, 18-21, 25-29 • May 5-7, 9-15, 23-31

**The Battle House RSA Spa Package \$207**

- March 1, 22-23 • April 5-7, 12-13, 19-21, 26-28
- May 5, 10-12, 24-26, 31

**Riverview Plaza \$109**

- March 1, 7-10, 17-18, 26-31
- April 4-8, 11-12, 17, 25-29 • May 5-7, 9-13, 30-31

**Grand Hotel \$127 plus a 15% resort fee**

- March 1-4, 7-11, 14-15, 31
- April 1, 4-7, 11-15, 18-22, 25-28
- May 2-6, 9-13, 16, 19-20, 26-27, 31

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

- March 1-4, 7-11, 14-15, 31
- April 1, 4-7, 11-15, 18-22, 25-28
- May 2-6, 9-13, 16, 19-20, 26-27, 31

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

- March 3-4, 10-11, 31 • April 1, 7, 14, 21-22, 28
- May 5-6, 12-13, 19-20, 26-27

**Marriott Shoals \$109**

- March 7, 14, 28 • April 4, 11, 18, 25
- May 2, 9, 16, 23

**Marriott Shoals RSA Spa Package \$210**

- March 7, 14, 28 • April 4, 11, 18, 25
- May 2, 9, 16, 23

**Renaissance Ross Bridge \$119**

- March 1-4, 7-11, 14-31
- April 1-8, 11-15, 18-22, 25-29 • May 2-9, 14-24

**Renaissance Ross Bridge RSA Spa Package \$223**

- March 1-3, 7-9, 14-17, 21-24, 28-31
- April 4-7, 11-14, 18-21, 25-28
- May 2-5, 9, 16-19, 23-26

**Auburn/Opelika Marriott Resort \$109**

- March 1-4, 7-11, 14-15, 17-18, 20-22, 28-31
- April 1, 4-9, 11-15, 18-22
- May 3-6, 9-13, 16-17, 20, 23-27

**Auburn/Opelika Marriott Resort RSA Spa Package \$201**

- March 3-4, 10-11, 17-18, 31
- April 1, 7-8, 14-15, 21-22 • May 5-6, 12-13, 20, 26-27

**Prattville Marriott \$89**

- March 4-6, 9-16, 21-30 • April 1, 3-5, 9-13, 15, 27-30
- May 1-4, 16-22, 27

**Renaissance Montgomery \$119**

- March 1-11, 14, 17-18, 21-25, 28-31
- April 1, 4, 11, 18-19, 25-26 • May 2-5, 9, 11-13

**Renaissance Montgomery RSA Spa Package \$223**

- March 2-6, 9-11, 17-18, 23-25, 30-31 • April 1
- May 4-5, 11-13

Specific room requests may require additional charge.  
Rates available the 1st of the month and are not applicable to groups.

800.228.9290 Ask for RSA rate. **Promotional Code: R2A** on [www.rsa-al.gov](http://www.rsa-al.gov)  
**Book Online and Save RSA \$4.**



## ERS Board of Control Seeks Candidates for Upcoming Election

Candidates are being sought for the Retired State Employee Position for the ERS Board of Control. This position is a three-year term beginning October 1, 2021, and is currently held by Norris Green. The nominee must be a retired state employee who is currently on the ERS retirement payroll.

Candidates are also being sought for the Active State Employee Position, No. 1, as Wendy Hester has retired. Nominees must be active vested members of the ERS by virtue of employment with a state agency. This position's term will begin immediately at the conclusion of this special election and will end September 30, 2022, at which point the candidate may run again for a complete four-year term.

Nomination packets are available at [www.rsa-al.gov](http://www.rsa-al.gov) or by contacting the Elections 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, 2021. The election will take place this May. ●

## TRS Board of Control Runoff Election Results

The TRS Election Committee met to certify the runoff election results. Congratulations to Thomas E. Jones on being elected to the Principal Position. Mr. Jones will begin his three-year term on July 1, 2021. ●



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