

A LEADERSHIP DIARY FROM CHALLENGING TIMES

Since March, our website, businessalabama.com, has been featuring a series of commentaries on the virus crisis by leading figures in Alabama business, government and education.

This collection of excerpts forms a leadership diary from these challenging times.

COMPILED BY CHRIS McFADYEN



MAURY GASTON
Chairman, Alabama Iron
and Steel Council

“If Alabama’s iron and steel industries were to pause, ductile iron pipe for water and sewer system construction would delay the building of homes in subdivisions, not just here but all across the country.”



CATHY SLOSS JONES
President and CEO of
Sloss Real Estate

“If you visit the Market at Pepper Place today, because of Covid-19, you will see a very different model. No walk ups or cash are allowed. Not as much fun, but a life saver for our farmers and a gift to our shoppers, who can continue to access locally grown, fresh produce, meats, cheeses and homemade breads. That’s about as short as a food chain can get, without growing it yourself.”



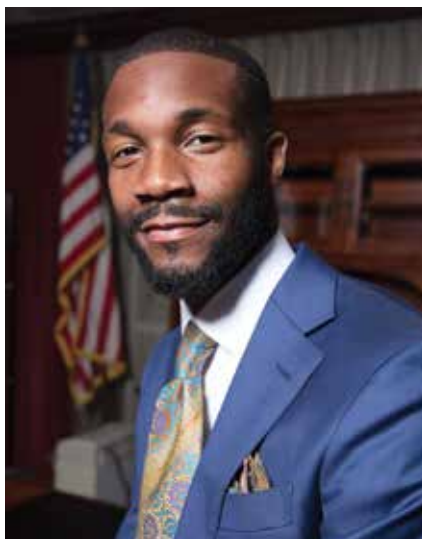
DAVID BRONNER
CEO of the Retirement Systems
of Alabama

“The whole key is getting money to the people in time. The only way to make it work is you have to spend a ridiculous amount of money on a bailout, like in ’08, but this time what you’ve got to do is get it to the businesses with 50 to 25 workers, or the restaurant with 10 people.”



DR. DON WILLIAMSON
President and CEO of the
Alabama Hospital Association

“There was \$100 billion in the CARES Act that was supposed to go to health care providers. Of that, \$50 billion has been distributed, and less than half went to hospitals. Of the first \$30 billion, \$240 million went to Alabama, and of that, only one third came to hospitals, physicians and other medical providers.”



RANDALL WOODFIN
Mayor of Birmingham

“The health and safety of all of our citizens starts with those who are most vulnerable to Covid-19: the elderly and those with serious chronic medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes and lung disease. It also includes our homeless population, as we work with local shelters and health care providers to coordinate and deliver the services necessary to protect them.”



TIM VINES
President and CEO of Blue Cross
and Blue Shield of Alabama

“We’ve expanded access to telehealth, which gives our customers the option to receive their care remotely to limit their exposure to Covid-19 and other illnesses. Telehealth is being used for patient consultations and evaluations for routine and chronic health conditions that, based on the provider’s medical opinion, can be managed over the phone.”



JIMMY LYONS
Director Emeritus of the
Alabama State Port Authority

“Whether it’s automobile parts or certain types of consumer goods like furniture, they just aren’t moving. The warehouses further up the supply chain of the automobile factories are all closed right now, and the supply chain is backed up. And so they’re not taking containers.”



JIM PURCELL
Executive Director of the
Alabama Commission on
Higher Education

“Funding broadband access is essential in the 21st century. Even before the pandemic, Alabama’s lawmakers recognized the need to expand broadband services and appropriated funding to do so for the current year.”



ZACH IVEY
Chief Investment Strategist at
Bridgeworth Wealth Management

“It’s different this time.” That phrase is a pretty well known and dangerous phrase for investors. But this time, everyone thinks it’s different this time. I don’t know anyone who has ever seen entire countries come to a halt, not caused by any other kind of event, such as a financial crisis.”



DR. ERIC WALLACE
UAB Medical Director
of telemedicine

“UAB is now doing 59 percent of its ambulatory care this way (telemedicine). We are up to about 1,300 video visits a day and about 1,200 phone visits. The number of video visits continues to increase, as providers have started to get to know the software better and the process continues to be refined.”



HUNTER RENFRO
Partner, Orchestra Partners

“There will be some things that will be permanently changed. That’s realistic. But permanent change comes from a change in beliefs. People behave based on the way they believe, and there are habits that can’t be retrained. The basic demand — people wanting to be around each other, the desire to be close to each other — is a genetic, intrinsic thing, and that is not going to change.”



PAUL BARBER
President of Valent Group

“New regulations, including the FFCRA and CARES Act, are complex. Companies need guidance to implement required leave and medical coverage. In addition, some employers must shut down and furlough or terminate employees, impacting benefits eligibility, ACA compliance and other legal requirements.”

JACKSON THORNTON AD



PAUL SCHABACKER
Head of PPP response
at ServisFirst Bank

ServisFirst is a good yardstick by which to measure PPP activity in Alabama, both because of its statewide market and because it has been one of the most active PPP lenders in the country.

“We filed 1,049 that (first) weekend,” says Schabacker. “On that first weekend, beginning April the 3rd, we worked 24 hour shifts, 30 people working overtime shifts overnight. For the month of April, we paid some 40 employees 120 hours of overtime.”



KAY PALAN

Dean

**Culverhouse College of Business,
University of Alabama**

“Here at the state’s flagship business school, we have an incredible expert resource in our faculty. Dr. Erik Johnson, an assistant professor of economics, offers practical advice: ‘Apply now for small business disaster loans; contact the Alabama Small Business Development Center; work with your employees so that you and they can hit the ground running when we get back to ‘normal,’ and don’t be ashamed to take help from the government or loyal customers.’”



BOB WOOD

Dean

**Mitchell College of Business,
University of South Alabama**

“The University has multiple degree programs that are offered completely online, and we are fortunate that many of our faculty have extensive experience teaching in this environment. Numerous seminars, workshops and meetings were conducted (almost all using distance-learning technology) for faculty and staff.”



MARK FAGAN

**Tourism consultant to the
Retirement Systems of Alabama**

“The current containment actions closely compare to travel reductions following the terrorist attack in New York on 9-11-2001,” says Fagan, but adds, “The economic consequences could be much worse.”

