

## There is No Excuse

EDITORIAL

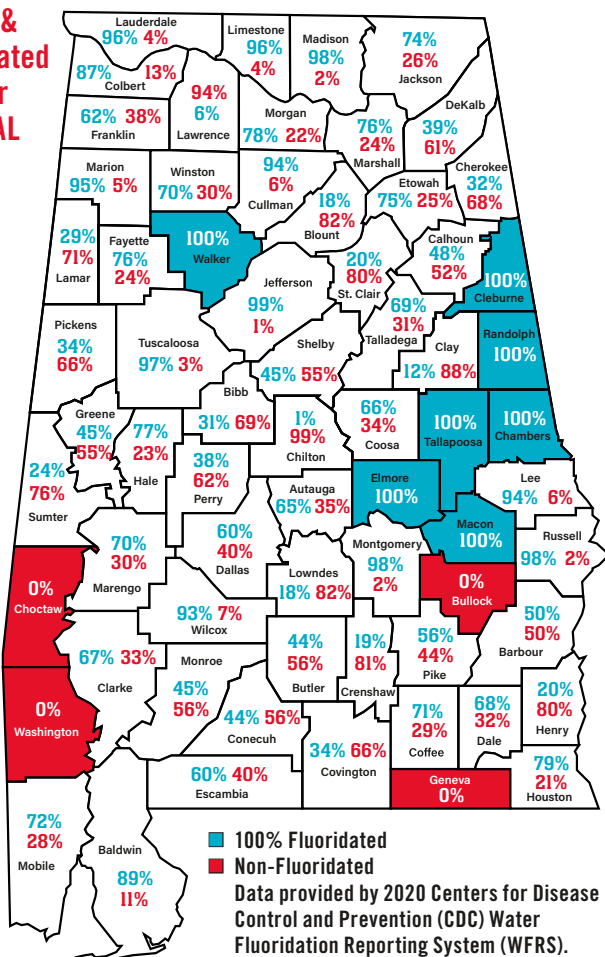
Since 1945, Community Water Fluoridation (CWF) has been touted as an ideal socioeconomic and equitable method of tooth ... decay prevention. In fact, it is considered one of the Ten Greatest Public Health Achievements of the 20th Century. By adjusting the level of fluoride in drinking water to the optimal level of 0.7 ppm, decay can be reduced by 18-40 percent for both children and adults. Every \$1 spent on water fluoridation saves \$20 in dental visits....

...Ranking 51st in the dentist-to-population ratio, Alabama has many challenges to overcome in access to care. Demographic distribution of dental offices poses a transportation obstacle for many, citing zero or one dentist in seven of our counties.... ●

### Fluoridated & Non-Fluoridated Public Water Systems in AL by Counties



Populations on public water systems may exceed the county census population. Many water systems span multiple counties. WFRS collects population data for primary and secondary counties for each water system. However, due to difficulty in assigning population values to multiple counties, the primary county information can be over-estimated.  
September 2023



# History of the RSA's Battle House Hotel in Mobile

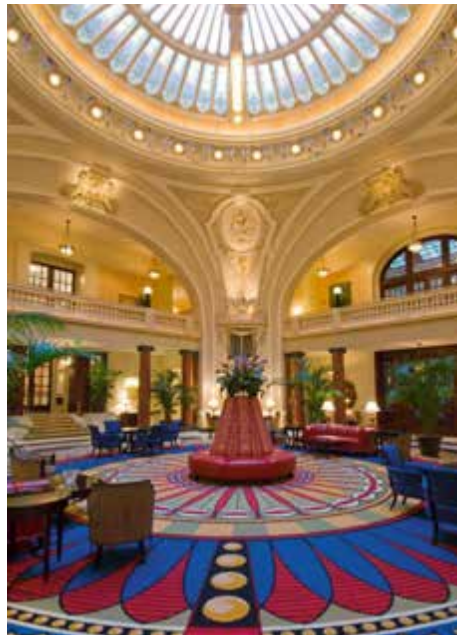
BY MARK FAGAN

The corner of Royal Street and St. Francis Street in Mobile has been historically significant since the early 1800s. Andrew Jackson moved his military headquarters to the site after defeating the Creek Indians at Horseshoe Bend in 1814. The first hotel on this site was the Franklin House, built in the then-State Capitol, Cahaba, and moved by flatboats to Mobile in 1825. The Alabama Hotel was constructed next door, and both buildings were destroyed by fire in 1829. The Waverly Hotel, a larger inn, soon replaced those two buildings but was destroyed by fire in 1850.

Construction for a new hotel on the site began in 1850 by three brothers from North Carolina (James, John, and Samuel Battle). This brick building (165 feet by 155 feet) had five stories that opened in 1852 as The Battle House Hotel and helped to establish Mobile as the commercial capital of Alabama for the next 50 years. Electric lighting was added to the hotel in 1884. It long ranked with the St. Charles Hotel in New Orleans as among the leading hotels of the South. Elegant functions and the initial Mardi Gras balls were held there. Among the notable visitors during its early decades were Jefferson Davis, President Millard Fillmore, Henry Clay, Stephen Douglas, Ulysses S. Grant, and Raphael Semmes.

In 1905, a fire at the hotel destroyed it and other buildings on the block. Soon after the fires, a group of Mobilians hired Frank Mills Andrews of New York City to design a hotel of fireproof steel, concrete, and brick with seven floors. It has a roof garden and a domed glass skylight in the lobby. The new Battle House Hotel reopened in 1908 with 240 rooms. There were improvements over the following years, and air conditioning was added to guest rooms and public spaces in 1949. The air conditioning job was one of the largest in the South at the time.

Sheraton Hotels bought the Battle House in 1958 and offered free parking, radio, and TV. During the 1960s and 1970s, two other owners operated the hotel. As Mobile expanded westward, downtown Mobile lost commerce, and the hotel closed in 1974. The empty building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1976. The roof sustained



damage from Hurricane Frederic in 1979, which led to substantial water destruction over the following years. By 1980, the abandoned hotel was the only building standing on the city block. Between 1980 and 2000, city officials tried to revive the hotel, but none of the projects materialized.

In 2001, David G. Bronner, CEO of the RSA, proposed building the RSA Battle House Tower, an 800-foot-tall office building that would include some new hotel rooms and connect to the existing Battle House Hotel. The dilapidated hotel's history warranted total restoration to its original glory. From 2002 to

2007, including a year of lost time due to hurricanes, The Trellis Room (restaurant), Crystal Ballroom, and historic lobby were restored. Only 40% of the original plaster could be restored and 60% had to be carefully recrafted from replication of the original molding. The existing guest rooms with small bathrooms were expanded, which reduced the number from 250 to 112. Asbestos was removed, support stabilization was added, and the electrical, plumbing, and heat/air systems were modernized per the modern building code.

There were 126 new guest rooms added on four floors in the adjoining tower (bringing the total to 238). A parking garage with a spa, fitness center, two swimming pools, hot tub, and tennis court on top was added with a skywalk over St. Francis Street connecting to the hotel. The 10,000-sf Grand Ballroom was added. The second-floor 1,800-sq balcony for viewing parades on Royal Street was restored. The Royal Street Tavern and Joe Cain Café were also added.

The RSA's Battle House Renaissance Mobile Hotel & Spa is affiliated with the RSA's site in Mobile (Magnolia Grove) on the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail and the RSA's other hotel in downtown Mobile (Renaissance Mobile Riverview Plaza Hotel). It is now a AAA Four Diamond property and one of *National Geographic Traveler's* "Top Places to Stay in North America." It was named "One of the Top 500 Hotels in the World" by *Travel + Leisure*. It was awarded the nation's "Best Historic Hotel" in 2020 for the midsize category by Historic Hotels of America. In 2022, this hotel was named Number Eight Best Historic Hotel in the U.S. by *USA Today*. It has been named Number One for Best Hotels in Alabama by *U.S. News & World Report*. ●

## A U.S. National Debt Crisis Is Coming

BY WILLIAM A. GALSTON, *THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*

Despite intensifying polarization, the Republican and Democratic parties are alike in one important respect: Both now behave as though budget deficits don't matter. Red and blue politicians

alike seem to think we can increase spending, cut taxes indefinitely, and borrow whatever we need to close the gap while running up the national debt—all without paying a price.

Why not make everyone happy by eliminating taxes altogether and borrowing everything? The answer is obvious:

CONTINUED ON PAGE THREE

## Alabama Success Story

### Alabama PALS

There's a reason our state is called "Alabama the Beautiful." From the sugar-sand beaches in the south to the rugged mountain foothills in the north, we are certainly blessed with an abundance of natural beauty. Unfortunately, it only takes a small amount of litter to mar our state's good looks and livability.

Alabama residents can certainly make a difference, and Alabama PALS (People Against a Littered State) was formed in 1987 to do just that. Dedicated to working with Alabama communities to promote a cleaner and healthier Alabama, PALS works together with state and local agencies, corporate sponsors, and thousands of dedicated volunteers to make Alabama a better place to live for all Alabamians.

PALS' programs allow communities to take ownership in litter prevention, cleanup, and control. Our programs cost nothing; all support materials are provided through the PALS office. PALS offers the Statewide Adopt-A-Mile Program, Adopt-A-Stream Program, the "Don't Drop it on Alabama" Spring Cleanup, the Alabama Coastal Cleanup, and the Alabama Clean Campus Program.

Since 1988, PALS has partnered with the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) to coordinate the Statewide Adopt-A-Mile Program. Over 900 miles of Alabama roadways are adopted and cleaned by volunteers in every corner of our state. Adopt-A-Mile signs with the participating group name are provided through PALS, and ALDOT provides trash bags for groups to pick up along state and federal highways. Similar to the Adopt-A-Mile Program, the

Adopt-A-Stream Program is designed to eliminate, control, and maintain litter at stream crossings in the state. This valuable program assists in cleaning and maintaining our most valuable water resources and is a positive factor in controlling debris in stormwater runoff.



The Annual "Don't Drop it on Alabama" Spring Cleanup is held each year in April and is available to all Alabama cities, counties, and communities. The 2024 Cleanup was one of the largest in history! During the cleanup this year, we had over 550 tons of litter reported as picked up in the state, with Mobile County participating for the first time and collecting 126 tons of litter alone! Our partnership with the Alabama Community College Systems of Alabama, RC&D, and Coca-Cola UNITED (Title Sponsor for the DDIOA Spring Cleanup) resulted in over 18,000 pounds of litter being removed from ACCS campuses and roadways!

Like the spring cleanup, the 2024 Alabama Coastal Cleanup was a huge success! PALS has partnered with the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural

Resources/State Lands/Coastal Section for the past 37 years for this annual event. In that time, our amazing volunteers have removed over 1.7 million pounds of litter from our beautiful and most valuable Gulf Coast. Over the past 5 years, we have incorporated recycling into the Coastal Cleanup, which resulted in over 5,000 items weighing over 200 pounds picked up at this year's event!

We ultimately want to see the numbers of litter picked up going down due to the education and prevention offered through the Alabama Clean Campus Program. The Clean Campus Program is not only a great way to introduce litter education into schools, but we can also help teachers meet their environmental teaching standards. PALS employs a full-time Clean Campus Coordinator who is available to visit schools for a 30-minute presentation about the importance of keeping litter off our streets and out of our waterways. The Clean Campus Program offers contests for students and schools to enter, provides bags and grabbers for those interested in conducting on-campus cleanups, and furnishes fun handouts to students and teachers. To sign up for the Clean Campus Program, see our online curriculum, or download a brochure, visit [www.alpals.org](http://www.alpals.org).

*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).* ●

## A U.S. National Debt Crisis Is Coming

continued from page two

No prospective lenders would believe that they'd be repaid in full. They would thus demand ever-higher rates of interest on debt. Eventually, the merry-go-round would grind to a halt, triggering a crisis the likes of which the U.S. has never faced.

Our current course—beset with rising net interest outlays and stagnant revenue—could also halt the merry-go-round, though in slow motion. At some point, the volume of debt needed to finance our deficits would exceed lenders' willingness to lend their cash reserves on terms that wouldn't ruin the economy.

That this hasn't yet happened is no evidence that it won't or can't. It proves only the wisdom of Adam Smith's famous reminder that "there is a great deal of ruin in a nation." We can recover from episodic folly, but if we persist in it, we're asking for trouble.

Let's recall recent history. The last time the U.S. federal government had a budget surplus was in 2001. Federal debt held by the public stood at \$3.3 trillion, about 33% of gross domestic product, and the government was on track to pay it off completely by the end of the decade.

Over the next two decades, the combination of tax cuts, spending increases, costly wars, and the fiscal pressure of an aging population reversed this trend. The national debt held by the public is now above \$28 trillion and is 99% of GDP. The 2024 budget deficit alone will be nearly \$2 trillion, which is 7% of GDP. The Congressional Budget Office projects that by 2035 debt held by the public will top \$50 trillion and total debt will equal 122% of GDP.... ●



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



Member Hotel  
Discounts Webpage

RETIREMENT SYSTEMS OF ALABAMA  
201 SOUTH UNION STREET  
P.O. BOX 302150  
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36130-2150

PRSR STD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
MONTGOMERY, AL  
PERMIT NO. 402

## ENJOY YOUR FALL/WINTER A Special Deal FOR RSA MEMBERS

### The Battle House,

#### A Renaissance Hotel \$129

- November 3-17, 24-26 • December 1-4, 13-21, 26-28
- January 2-13, 19-24

### The Battle House RSA Spa Package \$244

- November 4-6, 11-13, 25-26 • December 2-4, 16-17
- January 6-8, 13, 20-22

### Riverview Plaza \$119

- November 3-5, 8-10, 25-30
- December 1-4, 16-21, 26-28
- January 2-13, 15-17

### Grand Hotel \$137 (plus a 15% resort fee)

- November 3-4, 10-11, 17-18
- December 11-12, 15-17 • January 5-8, 12-13

### Grand Hotel RSA Golf Package \$209 (plus a 15% resort fee)

- November 3-4, 10-11, 17-18
- December 11-12, 15-17 • January 5-8, 12-13

### Grand Hotel RSA Spa Package \$285 (plus a 15% resort fee)

- November 3-4, 10-11, 17-18
- December 11-12, 15-17 • January 5-8, 12-13

### Marriott Shoals \$119

- November 3-4, 10-11, 17-18, 20-21, 24-28
- December 1-2, 8-9, 22-30 • January 1-12, 19-20

### Marriott Shoals RSA Spa Package \$229

- November 3, 20-21, 24, 27
- December 1, 8, 22 • January 1-5, 8-12, 19

### Renaissance Ross Bridge \$129

- November 3, 10-11, 17-19, 24-26
- December 15-19, 22-31 • January 1-12

### Renaissance Ross Bridge RSA Spa Package \$260

- November 3, 10-11, 17-19, 24-25
- December 15-17 • January 8-9

### 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.

- November 3-5, 11-12, 24-30
- December 1-2, 8-9, 15-16, 22-30
- January 1-2, 5-6, 12-13

### Auburn/Opelika Marriott Resort RSA Spa Package \$234 (plus a 10% resort fee)

- November 3-4, 11, 24-25
- December 1-2, 8-9, 15-16, 22-23
- January 1-2, 5-6, 12-13

### Prattville Marriott \$109

- November 10, 17-19, 24-26
- December 15-31 • January 5-12

### Renaissance Montgomery \$129

- November 3-4, 26-29 • December 15-18, 22-26
- January 1-8

### Renaissance Montgomery RSA Spa Package \$244

- November 26, 28-29 • December 17-18, 24-26
- January 1-4, 7-8

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

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

FOLLOW US

@RSAALGOV

## Candidates Sought for Six TRS Board Positions

Candidates are being sought for six positions on the TRS Board of Control: Teacher No. 1, held by Amanda Miller; Teacher No. 2, held by Ricky Whaley; Support Personnel No. 1, held by Susan Lockridge; Postsecondary, held by Susan Williams Brown; Higher Education No. 1, held by Will Walsh; and Retired No. 1, held by Peggy Mobley. The election will take place in January 2025. Elected members will begin their three-year term of service on July 1, 2025.

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 TRS office no later than 4:00 p.m., December 2, 2024. ●

## WANT TO HELP?



### A FREE CAR TAG

Tired of that worn-out dealer tag on the front of your car? Would you like to help the RSA and our Alabama Tourism Department advertise "Alabama's Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail" on your front bumper?

If so, call to request a tag at 334.517.7000 or 877.517.0020, or write:

Tag, P.O. Box 302150  
Montgomery, AL 36130-2150



### CEO

David G. Bronner

Deputy Director – Administration  
Jo Moore

Deputy Director – Investments  
Marc Green

### Executives

Communications  
Deborah J. Kirk

Chief Accountant & Financial Officer  
Diane E. Scott

Employees' and Judicial Retirement  
William F. Kelley, Jr.

Employer Services  
Margaret B. Sellars

Field Services  
Christopher C. Gallup

Information Technology Services  
Michael T. Baker

General Counsel  
Jared H. Morris

Legislative Counsel  
Neah M. Scott

Member Services  
Penny K. Wilson

### PEEHIP

J. David Wales

### RSA-1

Rhonda H. Peters

Teachers' Retirement  
Valerie Y. Summers

The Retirement Systems of Alabama  
201 South Union Street  
P.O. Box 302150  
Montgomery, Alabama 36130-2150  
Phone: 334.517.7000  
877.517.0020

RSA Website: [www.rsa-al.gov](http://www.rsa-al.gov)