



News Bulletin

Association of County Commissions of Alabama
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Legislative Conference set for Dec. 10 and 11

With the 2004 regular session of the Alabama Legislature just a few months away, county officials from throughout the state are encouraged to attend the ACCA Legislative Conference in December. The conference will focus on a host of legislative items expected to confront counties when the session begins in February.

Registration for the conference is now underway. The event is set for Dec. 10 and 11 at the Grand Hotel in Point Clear, Alabama. A registration form can be obtained at the Association's web-site "acca-online.org".

Supreme Court Hears Jail Case

The Alabama Supreme Court heard oral arguments earlier this month on the state's appeal in the decade-long county jail overcrowding lawsuit. Ken Webb represented the class of counties and sheriffs before the court.

The state's appeal focuses on whether the Alabama Department of Corrections had the "ability" to comply with the court's order to remove each state-sentenced prisoner no later than 30-days following the prisoner's sentencing. As of early October, the number or inmates in county jails past the 30-day grace period was less than 20 statewide!

Counties Consider Lawsuit on Internet Taxes

County revenue officers from throughout Alabama met earlier this month to discuss the possibility of a lawsuit to collect local sales taxes owed by Alabama retail companies that also own internet retail sites.

The promotion of internet sites with displays and other marketing tools inside Alabama stores may make the companies liable for collecting Alabama tax on sales

delivered into the state, according to attorneys who have filed similar suits in other states. The ACCA Board of Directors has adopted a resolution encouraging county commissions to look more closely at this issue. The ACCA staff is meeting with the attorneys and will keep counties posted on this very important issue.

Joint Bidding Program Entering Fourth Year

Alabama's unique joint bidding program, which allows county commissions to purchase items without conducting local bids, is entering its fourth year of operation with a scaled-down list of items.

In an effort to reduce effort on the part of both retailers and the Association staff, this year's program includes only those items that counties indicated they plan to purchase during 2004. The list includes heavy equipment, road signs and herbicide.

The invitations-to-bid are available on the ACCA web site. Bids will be opened at the Association office on Nov. 14 and items will be available for purchase beginning Jan. 1, 2004. Items on the 2003 program are still available through the last day of this year.

Preparation Begins for 2004 Legislative Session

Work has already started on the Association's Legislative Program for 2004. All five ACCA steering committees are meeting in October to review the 2003 program and to generate ideas for the up-coming session.

The program will be reviewed by the ACCA Legislative Committee in November and the ACCA Board of Directors in early December. The program will then be presented to the membership for discus-

sion and action at the Legislative Conference in Point Clear.

Administrators Focus on Human Resource Issues

More than 20 county administrators attended a one-day training session earlier this month on Human Resource Audits. The training was designed to help administrators recognize problems in the workplace and develop skills to address those problems in a productive manner.

The training is part of the continuing education required for those administrators that have obtained the designation of "Certified County Administrator."

New Training Designed for Engineering Supervisors

The Association of County Engineers of Alabama is about to unveil a new training program aimed specifically for road department supervisors. The program will be held during the winter months and is designed to provide these supervisors with basic skills necessary to deal with problems on road construction sites and county shops. The classes will be held in January and February.

Counties Bail Out of Special Election

A legislative resolution initially drafted to set a special election on local constitutional amendments in as many as 15 counties is now expected to produce special elections in only three or four Alabama counties on Nov. 4, 2003.

The ACCA was successful in removing a number of counties from the resolution because the commissions expressed a desire to avoid the cost of such a special election. Other counties have taken advantage of another ACCA-drafted amendment that allowed the withdrawal of the election with the adoption of a resolution during the commission's first meeting in October. Those counties electing not to participate in the special election will have their amendments on the ballot in the regularly-scheduled 2004 election cycle and, therefore, will not incur any additional cost.

Supplements Phasing Out

Most of the salary supplements paid by counties to

district and circuit judges as well as district attorneys have now phased out as a result of the "Investment in Justice Act of 1999". This act provided salary increases for circuit and district judges and also reduced (over time) the county supplements to these officials. The act also completely eliminated such supplements for judges and district attorneys taking office for the first time after October 1, 2001,

Counties that have specific questions about any supplements that may be contained in their newly-adopted budgets are encouraged to contact the Administrative Office of Courts or the ACCA.

Engineers Fall Meeting

The Department of Transportation's mandatory fall meeting with county engineers is Oct. 28 and 29 in Montgomery. The meeting will focus on new policies and procedures implemented by the department during the last year.

This annual event is scheduled to ensure effective communicate and efficient working conditions between the Alabama Department of Transportation and the 67 county engineering departments. The agenda is developed by Frank Courson, County Transportation Engineer.

City/County Managers Gather in Huntsville

The fall meeting of the Alabama City/County Managers Association is set for Nov. 5-6, 2003 in Huntsville. This year's meeting agenda includes sessions on creating revenue from tourism, travel and film, the state's financial future and changes in Alabama's election laws. Registration information can be obtained from the ACCA web site.

Workers Comp Refund Checks in the Mail

Counties and other entities participating in the ACCA Workers Compensation Fund will soon be receiving refund checks for their prorated portion of \$750,000 approved by the Fund to be returned. Checks should be in the mail by November 1.