



THE VOICE OF ALABAMA

ALABAMA CITIZENS FOR
CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

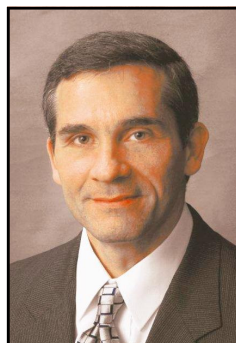
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Legislators introduce range of reform bills

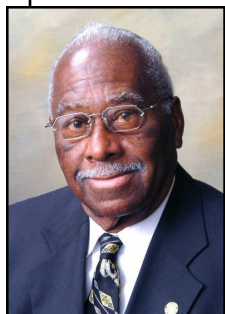
Many legislators are focusing on constitutional reform this year. As you know, we in ACCR have aimed for a rewrite of the Constitution for many years. But we listened to legislators and their concerns about change, and so are supporting all of the following forms of reform.

- President Pro Tem of the Senate, **Del Marsh**, right, sponsored SJR82 to establish a Constitutional Revision Commission. It will be composed of the Governor, Speaker of the House, President Pro Tempore of the Senate and three persons who reflect the diversity of the State, appointed by each. The Alabama Law Institute will serve as staff and advisors. The Commissioners will recommend changes to the Constitution

to the Legislature on several articles using a schedule that begins in 2011 and ends in 2014. It passed the House and Senate and has been signed by the Governor.



- Rep. **Demetrius Newton**, left, has sponsored HJR 34 in the House, a Resolution which calls for a constitutional convention.



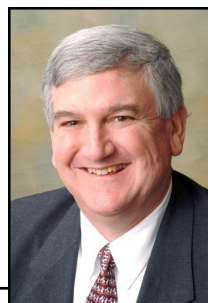
- Senator **Roger Bedford**, right, has sponsored SJR 27, in the Senate, a Resolution that calls for a constitutional convention. Both Resolutions are in their respective Rules Committees.



- Senator **Arthur Orr**, left, sponsored SB 112, a constitutional amendment which will eliminate the racist language from our Constitution. It has passed through the Senate and the House Judiciary Committee chaired by Rep. Paul DeMarco, and is now on the floor of the House.



- Rep. **Mike Hill**, right, has sponsored HB 181, a constitutional amendment which will allow lim-



IN THIS ISSUE:

<i>Intern writes for home rule</i>	2
<i>Reform briefs</i>	3
<i>ACCR partners with Leading Edge</i>	4

Continues next page . . .



... From page 1



ited home rule to counties that vote to accept it. But it does **not allow any form of taxation**. It is in the House County and Municipal Government Committee.

- Rep. **Paul DeMarco**, left, has sponsored HB20, a constitutional amendment that will modernize the Banking Article. DeMarco also sponsored HB21, a constitutional amendment that will update the Corporate Article. Both bills passed in the House and are now in the Senate.

- Rep. **Patricia Todd**, right, has sponsored HB207, a constitutional amendment that would allow a small portion from motor vehicle taxes and fees to be used for public transportation. It is in the Ways and Means Committee of the General Fund of the House.



Please ask your legislators to support these pieces of legislation, and thank the sponsors for their sponsorships. www.legislature.state.al.us

Intern writes for home rule

ACCR Inc. Intern **Eric Click**, who has just graduated from Samford University, has sent letters to the editors of the small rural weeklies and dailies on the subject of home rule, as follows:

Dear Editor,

On April 7th, the county and municipal government committee in the state legislature held a public hearing on House Bill 181, which would allow counties the option of voting to give their county commissions a specific set of limited powers. These powers are called home rule, because they would allow the commissioners to pass laws at home in their own counties that their citizens need. This includes such things as picking up dead animals, spraying for mosquitoes, establishing fire protection districts or water treatment provisions, disposing of solid waste or establishing park or library districts. Your county can't even stop a rock quarry or landfill from coming right next door to your home because they don't have zoning powers. Commissioners cannot do these things on their own, but must instead ask legislators in Montgomery to pass bills to allow them, and then must ask the entire State's voters to approve the bills. Sometimes the legislators give counties the legislation they need, but sometimes they don't. Sometimes the voters in a county approve a bill to provide what they need, but then the voters from the rest of the state vote it down. It keeps county commissioners from doing what their citizens need and is an inefficient way to run a county.



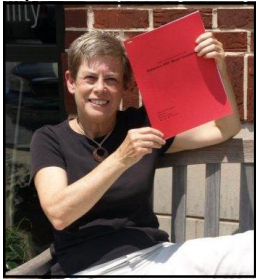
Given that some rural counties in Alabama have had bad experiences with home rule in the past, I thought I would take some time to explain what a grassroots, non-profit organization of citizens who are working for constitutional reform (ACCR) say about the bill.

A number of objections were anticipated, and in order to make the bill as feasible and acceptable as possible, amendments were included to address several concerns. As amended, the bill does not include any taxation powers, and limits zoning powers only to land which is owned by the county. Most importantly, the bill precludes county commissions from interfering with private property.

Perhaps most critical of all, which may not have been sufficiently explained, is that the bill is merely an option. It is up to the citizens of a county to decide if their county commission receives these new powers. It is important to note that this first requires a referendum in that county on actually holding a vote, allowing citizens to mobilize in opposition if they so wish when the actual vote is held. Further, the bill is not permanent, and includes a path for the people of a county to sign a petition of 20% of the voters in a county, allowing them to repeal the powers.



REFORM BRIEFS



Chris Underwood, left, of the Birmingham region is a volunteer extraordinaire, shown with a booklet she had printed of ACCR's Mock Convention's Constitution. She had 140 printed and delivered to each legislator to let them see what is possible when the people sit down to write a new constitution. Chris, a former librarian, also contacted the 280 public libraries in Alabama and had copies of "Open Secret" plus a study guide delivered to them. Finally, Chris contacted the new legislators to tell them about the need for a new constitution and set up meetings with them.

Kelsey Stamps, right, is a member of the UAB chapter of PRCA (Public Relations Council of Alabama). PRCA is part of a nationwide organization that encourages and develops public relations opportunities. Kelsey's group is called UAB PRCA/PRSSA. PRSSA stands for Public Relations Student Societies of America. This year they worked with ACCR and plan to establish social media (Facebook and Twitter) accounts and messages later this fall to increase awareness of ACCR and the need for constitutional reform in the state of Alabama



Christina Varghese, left, our intern at UAB, who established the current UAB College Council chapter, wrote a graduate thesis on the way Judge Howell Heflin accomplished reform of the Judicial Article. She found that issues he faced then are similar to what we face today when we seek reform. She found: *"The initial group of opposition was comprised of farmers, timber owners, and some business interests as well as Justice of the Peace appointees whose positions would be eliminated upon passage of the Article";* and, *"This unrivaled effort by Heflin suggests that his strong leadership, will, foresight, and apparent good intent were what mobilized an entire state towards progress, towards the future. More importantly, his efforts pushed the people of Alabama a little further past their impeding fear of change."* Her paper will soon be available on our web site.

At right, **Fox TV Channel 10**, WALA in Mobile, taped three 20-minute interview segments on the Alabama Constitution and the effort to bring reform, for their program "Speak Up" in April. Panel members included Karlos F. Finley, lawyer and Co-Chair of the Mobile Region of ACCR; Mary McGinnis, President of the Mobile Area League of Women Voters, and Jeff Ridgeway, volunteer member of ACCR Inc. The three segments were aired on Saturdays and Sundays in May on Channel 10 WALA and on Channel 12 WFNA and will be available on the ACCR web site www.constitutionalreform.org soon. The event was initiated and coordinated by Jeff Ridgeway.



At left, **UAB College Chapter of ACCR** met in April to hear from *Birmingham News* columnist John Archibald, third from right.



At right, the **University of Montevallo College Chapter of ACCR** met in April to view and discuss the film "It's A Thick Book."



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ACCR, Inc., is a 501(c)4 non-partisan advocacy organization. We grew out of a rally in Tuscaloosa on April 7, 2000, as part of a grassroots movement for civic renewal and constitutional revision.

We are devoted to the idea that people deserve the best government they can design. We want a state constitution that unites, rather than divides, our people. We want to create a civic atmosphere in which politics can function for the benefit of all citizens, rather than for a few powerful interests.

The Constitutional Reform Movement begins with the citizen, who holds the highest office in our democracy.

For **FREE** e-mail subscription, go to:
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ACCR to partner with Leading Edge this month

ACCR Inc. will work with the Leading Edge Institute during their Institute Week this month. The Judson College women who are part of this leadership organization will visit areas of Marion on June 19 to get signatures and contact information from residents who are interested in participating in a discussion group about constitutional reform at a restaurant in town. The discussion groups will be held two weekends in July. ACCR Inc. partnered with Leading Edge in 2008 in this same type of program, which resulted in two focus groups in Marion that year.

PolSci group hears from ACCR leaders

The Alabama Political Science Association held its annual conference at Samford University on April 15 and 16. ACCR was invited to provide a segment of the program titled "Democracy Denied: The Need for Constitutional Reform in Alabama." The panel featured Lenora Pate, lawyer and Chair of ACCR Inc.; Nancy Ekberg, Communications Chair of ACCR Inc., and Melanie Jeffcoat, creator, director and producer of the film "Open Secret." Interesting audience interaction was provided by friends of ACCR that included Dr. Robert Schaefer, former professor at Mobile University and now at the University of West Georgia and Dr. Glen Browder, author and professor at Jackson State University.