ACCR Short Speech Outline

1. Introduction – who you are, who ACCR is

2. History
   a. 1901 Constitution is the 6th constitution we’ve had
   b. Populist movement – blacks and poor whites begin to find they have common interests –
      challenged the ruling, conservative Democrats
   c. Solution to Populist “problem”? – Disenfranchisement – Main reason for 1901 const
   d. Fraudulently ratified – “winning” majority came from Black Belt
   e. Gutted democracy – black voters fell from 181k to 3k and 40k whites lost vote
   f. Concentrated power into Montgomery – easier to control

3. Calls for Reform
   a. 1st Call for reform: Gov Emmett O’Neal (1914) – “antiquated fundamental law”
   b. 5 other reform efforts from state leaders over the years – ACCR 1st grassroots
   c. Judicial article success in 1973 – Heflin

4. Major Problems
   a. Ineffective Government
      i. Constitution supposed to be framework for gov’t
      ii. AL always on bottom of the good lists and top of the bad lists
          1. Governingmag’s (2001) lowest avg grade for state gov’t
   b. Lack of Local Democracy
      i. Local gov’t lacking authority to properly govern themselves
      ii. Only state in SE without local democracy (or “home rule”)
      iii. Ties up Legislature’s time and creates cumbersome process for local gov’ts
      iv. Reason why we have such crazy amendments like…
          1. 520 – Allows Madison Co to excavate human remains
          2. 497 – Prohibits overgrowth of weeds, junk in Jeff Co
          3. 351 – Tax for Mobile Co to spray for mosquitoes and kill rats
          4. 688 – Prohibit prostitution in Jeff Co
          5. 674 – Bingo in White Hall, Lowndes County (pop. 814)
      v. Longest constitution in nation, probably world
          1. 743 amendments; 12x longer than avg
   c. Recurring Revenue Crisis
      i. Property and income taxes imbedded – leads to high regressive sales taxes –
         Heavier burden on poor – Unreliable – Proration
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ii. Income tax deep into poverty – Family of 4 at $4600/yr (MS begins at $19,600)
iii. Property tax burden lowest in the nation by far
iv. Excessive earmarking – little flexibility – AL 90%, Avg State 20%

5. Methods of Revision
   a. Amendments, article by article, and convention
   b. All changes must come from Legislature and be approved by voters

6. What you can do
   a. Join ACCR – Blue brochures or online
   b. Get involved with a local chapter
   c. Sign up for our mailing list and email list
   d. Educate yourselves (“Century of Controversy”, ACCR website, newspapers)
   e. Contact legislators and other public officials

7. Bottom Line: We’ve got to modernize AL’s const before we can reach our potential and be the best AL we can be.