

Takeaways from Aguado's Edited Volume on Alabama Constitution

— By Aaron Blankenship

Never Gonna Change? An Examination of the 1901 Alabama Constitution includes many insights that highlight why reforming Alabama's Constitution has been such a long and difficult process. The editor, Dr. Alexander Aguado, chairs the Department of Politics, Justice, Law, and Philosophy at the University of North Alabama, where he also teaches as a professor of political science. The battle to revise the Constitution has persisted for many years, with varying levels of calls for reform appearing over time. Changing the Alabama Constitution has proven to be difficult. While being cautious regarding political change can be helpful at times, overarching levels of caution can inhibit drastically needed change. Despite an insistence on the status quo, reforms can occur when the right environment exists for these changes to take place.

One way to understand how reform can occur within these environments is through the multiple streams theory which explains that reforms can be brought about when three streams of policy – problem, policy, and political – all converge and bring forth reforms (Aguado, 2024). The problem stream is associated with ongoing issues or concerns in need of being addressed. The policy stream correlates with the creation of solutions to these problems by policymakers. Finally, the political stream is associated with the general status of opinions and public support for policy change. and the political stream exists around the general political vibes and opinions at the time. **(Continued Next Page)**

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In the South, reforms often succeed when a well-known leader champions the cause for reform. In the case of Alabama's judicial systems, the Chief Justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, Howell Heflin, jumped behind a clear policy objective to reform the judicial system in the state. The Alabama judicial system was reformed to rely less on the old arbitrary nature of proceedings and more on uniform procedures such as creating a simple appeals process, allowing judge specialization, reduction of manpower waste, and other needed reforms. In the case of Georgia, George Busbee campaigned on a reconstruction of the 1976 Georgia Constitution through a very careful revision process that sought to eliminate substantial amounts of unnecessary bloat to the document. Busbee and the many champions of the cause throughout the process saw the course through and the state overwhelmingly approved a ratification of the 1983 Georgia Constitution that brought forth many needed reforms including banning amendments to the constitution that targeted only one county or municipality, giving local governments more autonomy, and most importantly: shrinking the size of the Constitution by roughly half the initial length (Aguado, 2024).

Many of the issues that plagued Georgia's Constitution still ring true within the structure of the current 1901 Alabama Constitution, which is still extremely lengthy and highly outdated. The context of the policy objectives to seek out a reconstruction of the Alabama Constitution ring throughout the many landmark achievements that Southern states accomplished when the right elements were in place to lead to these achievements. Looking at Georgia's experience, Alabama can also benefit from the positive changes brought about if the right mixture of interest, support, and leadership converges on the issue of constitutional reform.

Want to read the article?

https://una.pressbooks.pub/app/uploads/sites/28/2024/07/NeverGonnaChangeEbook_Nov12.pdf

ACCR Webinar on PARCA Report: Alabama Constitution's Impact on Taxes and Spending

— By Aaron Blankenship

ACCR's recent webinar offered participants a breakdown of the information contained within the PARCA report written by Tom Spencer that highlights the glaring impact that Alabama's Constitution has on taxes and spending within the state. Many questions were brought forth to Tom Spencer regarding general structural issues with the current Constitution in addition to many specifics such as the lasting impacts that policies such as earmarking revenue have on the state. The webinar addressed the centralization of power in Montgomery and how the Constitution enshrined these centralization measures, prohibiting home rule for most localities within the state. Additionally, Tom Spencer highlighted the robust number of regulations regarding taxing within the Constitution, noting that there are many codified limitations within the Constitution on how money can be raised or spent.

Significant emphasis was given during the webinar towards how these glaring issues with the Constitution impact the average Alabamian. Topics under this general umbrella included highlighting how low property taxes hurt average Alabamians, how federal deductions from state taxes hurt the average Alabamian, and how income taxes beginning at very low levels, essentially poverty levels, hurts most Alabamians. Additionally, emphasis was given to how lax taxation on specialized lands such as timberland also impacts communities around the land in addition to hampering potential revenue for the state. Although there are many obstacles ahead, Tom Spencer noted what the next steps moving forward ought to be, including emphasis on restoring power for taxation back to the legislature and ending earmarking of revenue. A link to the webinar is located here:

<http://bit.ly/43irtDY>

Have you missed prior PARCA Reports on the Alabama Constitution? Click the links on the last page to read more.

The Legacy of Dr. Cathy Randall

— By Aaron Blankenship



Very few Alabamians, male or female, have had quite the lasting impact that Dr. Cathy Randall has had throughout her life. Holding two Ph.D. degrees from The University of Alabama in addition to her countless accolades such as leading the Honors program at UA for decades and being a member of countless influential boards and organizations, Dr. Randall has truly left a lasting impact within the state. Perhaps one of the clearest points of emphasis that highlights her lasting impact, Dr. Randall was honored as one of the top 31 female graduates of the University of Alabama in the 20th century in addition to having her and her late husband's name adorning the new welcome center on the campus of the University of Alabama.

Considering Dr. Randall's significant list of accolades, contributions, and a whole host of other acknowledgements, Dr. Randall attributes lots of her success to her beginnings with a supportive set of parents and sisters who affirmed and believed in her and her ability to make a life-long impact. Dr. Randall has continually acknowledged the lasting impact current Alabama Governor Kay Ivey has had in her life, starting with Ivey's insistence many years ago when she was a student-teacher that Dr. Randall represent her school at Girls State and run for Girls State governor, a position Dr. Randall won that year. In addition to her friendship with Kay Ivey that began through Girls State, Dr. Randall found her husband through the experiences, with Dr. Randall and her husband, Pettus Randall, becoming the first Alabamians to be elected Girls Nation President and Boys Nation President respectively. Similarly, connections through

Girls State eventually led Dr. Randall to be a crucial mentor for current Alabama Senator, Katie Boyd Britt, which has also bestowed upon both her and Britt invaluable lessons from each other.

The flame of success that Dr. Randall and Pettus Randall started continues in their children, with all three of their children holding advanced degrees from exceptional universities, including a handful of the Ivy League in addition to world-renowned institutions such as Oxford and Cambridge. A desire to break through glass ceilings and let nothing stand in her way has gotten Dr. Randall to where she is today, with Dr. Randall truly leaving a lasting impact on the state through her past and continued efforts that many individuals could only dream of accomplishing.

Marian Loftin Resigns from ACCR Board

— By Aaron Blankenship

Alabama Citizens for Constitutional Reform has announced that Marian Loftin has resigned from the Board of Directors. An integral part of the mission of ACCR since its creation, Marian Loftin has done immeasurable work to advance the goals of ACCR in addition to the many other organizations she has been a part of over the years. Loftin's work as a founder and board member for Alfred Saliba Family Services Center in Dothan became a state-wide affair, with 26 centers now existing throughout the state under the Alabama Network of Family Resource Centers. Appointed by Bob Riley, one of Alabama's former governors, to be the Executive Director of the State of Alabama Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention, Loftin has spent countless hours championing the cause of reduction and prevention of child abuse and neglect throughout the state. In addition to her work with other organizations such as Wiregrass United Way and the American Heart Association, the legacy Marian Loftin leaves with ACCR and her other endeavors is a legacy of compassionate leadership with a drive to serve Alabama's families and the state. Alabama Citizens for Constitutional Reform is truly grateful for the service that Marian Loftin has given for the organization over her years of service. Her presence on the Board of Directors will be missed, although her legacy of service continues through the continued efforts of ACCR to seek out constitutional reform in Alabama.

Links of Interest to ACCR Readers:

- <https://parcalabama.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/The-Government-Closest-to-the-People.pdf>
- <https://parcalabama.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/PARCA-Analysis-of-General-Election-Statewide-Amendment.pdf>
- https://parcalabama.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/PARCA-Amendment-Analysis_November-2020.pdf
- <https://parcalabama.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/The-Alabama-Constitutions-Impact-on-Taxes-and-Spending.pdf>

Help ACCR fund efforts to make the Alabama Constitution work for Alabamians

ACCR is working with the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama (PARCA) to study how the Alabama Constitution impacts the wellbeing of our citizens. Your donation will help ACCR develop and implement a statewide action plan to address specific problem areas.

Donate Today: constitutionalreform.org