

Centreville Press

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205.926.9769 | editor@centrevillepress.com



Happy New Year! Welcoming 2026!

BY SAVANNAH LOGAN
REPORTER

West Blocton First Baptist Church invites the community to come together for a joyful New Year's Eve Celebration on Main Street, marking the close of 2025 and the hopeful beginning of 2026 with fellowship, fun, and gratitude.

This family-friendly evening is designed to bring people of all ages together as the church reflects on God's faithfulness over the past year and looks ahead with hope. Festivities will begin at 8:00 p.m. with food, fellowship, and games. Guests can enjoy a cozy soup bar, playful games, and plenty of dress-up accessories that add a festive touch and plenty of laughter for kids and adults alike.

The celebration will continue with a fire-

works display at 10:00 p.m., lighting up Main Street as the community gathers to welcome the New Year together. It's a meaningful opportunity to slow down, connect with neighbors, and celebrate the joy of togetherness in a warm and welcoming environment.

Families, friends, and community members are encouraged to attend and be part of this special evening. The event will take place at West Blocton First Baptist Church on Main Street on December 31st, and all are welcome to join in the celebration.

As the countdown to a new year begins, West Blocton First Baptist Church looks forward to ringing in 2026 with faith, fellowship, and fireworks – together.



Measles Cases Rise Amid Holiday Travel

The number of measles cases is continuing to grow, reaching 1,958 confirmed cases in 43 states through Dec. 16 and threatening to undo next year the United States' status as a nation that has eradicated the disease, according to a report released Dec. 17 by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The increase of 46 cases in one week, including dozens more in South Carolina alone, raises concerns for holiday travelers.

Cases have now reached 803 in Texas, 182 in Arizona, 142 in South Carolina, 122 in Utah, and 100 in New Mexico this year.

West Texas has been the epicenter this year, but recently South Carolina has seen measles "spread quickly in unvaccinated households" in the Spartanburg County area, and 168 people were quarantined as of Dec. 16, according to the state health department.

The state urged employers to accommodate people with quarantine orders to help avoid more spread, warning that the disease is highly contagious for days before a person is aware of

being sick.

Towns with low vaccination rates along the Arizona/Utah border also have seen recent outbreaks.

By July, national case numbers had already surpassed a 2019 outbreak, bringing this year's case load to the largest in 33 years. The last time there were more cases was 1992, when there were 2,126, according to the CDC report.

The continued outbreak, reflecting a worldwide increase in the disease but also a rise in vaccine hesitancy that has been encouraged at times by U.S. Secretary of Health Robert F. Kennedy Jr. threatens the hard-won measles eradication declared in 2000 for the United States.

The CDC maintained in November that it was still possible to eliminate measles in the U.S. by ensuring every child has two doses of vaccine, but vaccination rates have been falling further away from the 95% minimum rate that limits spread.

Even as cases have risen this year, the CDC has communicated less about the highly contagious disease on social media,

according to Johns Hopkins University research published this month.

The agency posted 10 times on social media this year between January and August, compared with an average of 46 times in the previous four years, according to the report, despite a rising number of cases.

Ruth Lynfield, Minnesota state epidemiologist, said vaccine hesitancy may not be the whole story of low vaccination rates, in a video interview published Dec. 16 by Contagion, an infectious disease news service. Minnesota has 26 measles cases this year, down from 70 last year.

"Overall, there is vaccine confidence. Ninety-two percent of our kids [nationally] are vaccinated against measles. However, in particular communities, that number can be quite low," Lynfield said.

"One thing we can do is ensure that we can make it as simple and convenient as possible for parents and families to bring kids in to get vaccinated," she said.

Source: *Alabama Reflector*



Gov. Ivey awards \$43.8 million to help low-income households with heating, cooling costs

Gov. Kay Ivey has awarded grants totaling about \$43.8 million to assist low-income households with home energy costs during the winter and summer months.

The grants will enable 18 community action agencies to provide emergency assistance to help low-income Alabama residents cover the costs of heating or cooling their homes.

"The cost of heating a home during the coldest parts of winter and cooling it during the hottest parts of summer can pose a challenge for those who are most vulnerable and have extremely limited incomes," Gov. Ivey said. "These grants will ensure that help is available to those who need it most during extreme weather."

The state's community action agencies manage the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program at the local level and receive applications from individuals seeking assistance.

The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs is administering the grants from funds made available by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The funding announced today includes both the regular LIHEAP allocations plus supplemental funding through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

"This program is meant to help people who have the lowest income and those who are most vulnerable, including the elderly, people with disabilities and young children,"

ADECA Director Kenneth Boswell said. "ADECA stands with Gov. Ivey in supporting Alabamians who are in need of this emergency assistance."

Below is a list of each grant, the recipient agency, counties served, telephone number and website. Please note that the funding allocations announced today may not be immediately available for application at the local level. The application periods are established locally by each community agency.

Community Service Programs of West Alabama Inc.: \$4.27 million. (Bibb, Choctaw, Dallas, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Perry, Sumter, Tuscaloosa) 205-752-5429, <https://cspwal.com/>.



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NEWS

Alabama DHR Launches Chipped EBT Cards for SNAP & TANF Benefits

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — The Alabama Department of Human Resources is excited to announce that the first round of Alabama EBT cardholders are now receiving new, chip-enabled EBT cards. The new cards will greatly increase card security, adding more protection against the theft of EBT benefits. Alabama DHR is currently conducting a pilot program to test these chip-enabled EBT cards in Autauga, Bullock, Chambers, Chilton, Coosa, Lee, Lowndes, Macon, Russell, Shelby, and Tallapoosa counties. The pilot program should last approximately 30-45 days. Following a successful pilot program, chip-enabled EBT cards will be mailed to ALL cardholders residing in the remaining Alabama counties. Both SNAP and TANF program benefits will automatically be transferred to the new chipped EBT card.

- All personal information has been

moved to the back side of the card.

- An expiration date and 3-digit card security code have been added to increase security.
- The expiration date is only for the card and not related to benefits.
- Benefits will remain the same, and you can still use your EBT card in the same places.

“This change has been in the works for a long time and to see it finally come to fruition is incredibly rewarding knowing our EBT clients’ benefits will be better protected,” said Commissioner Nancy Buckner. “A special thanks to the Alabama Grocers Association and Petroleum & Convenience Marketers of Alabama for helping us spread the word to grocery and convenience stores to upgrade their point-of-sale systems and accept chipped cards. They were instrumental in making this transition quick and seamless.”

EBT cardholders will need to activate their new card when it arrives in the mail. To activate the chipped

card, cardholders will now be prompted by EBT Customer Service to enter their card number, DOB, zip code, 3-digit security code, and the expiration date. New cards must be activated within 180 days after it is issued. After activating your new EBT card, we ask for cardholders to destroy the old card immediately. All EBT cardholders are encouraged to use their new, chipped EBT card by inserting the chipped card into the point-of-sale device when making a purchase, rather than swiping it. Should the chipped end of the card fail to work, the card can be swiped through the device to make a purchase. Please keep in mind these details of the new chip-enabled cards:

- Will not work at the retailer point-of-sale device if the retailer has not made the appropriate updates to the POS system.
- Will have a mag-

netic stripe as a “fallback”, but the retailers must ensure that their point-of-sale system will allow chipped EBT cards to “fallback” to magnetic stripe until EBT chip cards are fully supported on the point-of-sale system. Retailers should contact their point-of-sale provider today to ensure their system will allow EBT chip cards to “fallback” to magnetic stripe transactions. Alabama DHR also recommends all EBT clients to continue locking their card through the ConnectEBT app. For EBT cardholders needing assistance with the new chip-enabled EBT card, please call EBT Customer Service at 1-800-997-8888. For retailers needing assistance with upgrading their POS system, please visit USDA’s SNAP EBT Modernization website at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/ebt/modernization/chip-resources>

Rep. Sewell Accepting Applications for Spring 2026 Internships



Washington D.C. — The Washington D.C. and district offices of U.S. Rep. Terri Sewell (AL-07) are currently accepting applications for spring 2026 interns. College students and recent graduates interested in government and public service are invited to apply for a chance to spend the semester learning about the inner workings of a congressional office. Interns will work closely with Rep. Sewell’s staff on a variety of important legislative, communications, and administrative tasks. Applicants must be enrolled in a college or university (juniors and older) or have recently graduated.

“Interns play a key role in my office,” said Rep. Sewell. “Each semester, our interns work alongside me and my staff to serve the people of Alabama’s 7th Congressional District. Through this experience, they build practical skills, gain firsthand insight into public service, and form connections that help prepare them for their careers. If you have an interest in government and public service, I encourage you to apply!”

Interns will have the opportunity to research legislation, draft letters, compile media clips, answer constituent calls, and attend legislative hearings, briefings, and seminars. Candidates should be proactive, professional, dependable, and have an interest in federal policy and the legislative process. Candidates should also possess strong written and oral communication skills, the ability to multitask, attention to detail, and a willingness to learn.

The Office of U.S. Rep. Terri Sewell is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not discriminate in the hiring process based on race, color, religion, sex, gender identity, national origin, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, genetic information, age, military service, or other non-merit factors. BIPOC applicants and individuals in under-represented communities are encouraged to apply.

The deadline to apply is Monday, January 5, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. CST (6:00 p.m. EST). For more information, including how to apply, visit <https://sewell.house.gov/internship-opportunities>.





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As the holiday season is upon us, we want to extend our heartfelt thanks for your trust and loyalty. Your support has been a vital part of our journey, and we are truly grateful.

May your Christmas be merry, your New Year bright, and your holidays filled with warmth and cheer. We look forward to serving you in the year ahead!

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LOCAL & GOVERNMENT

Centreville News

By Brenda Hubbard

The BCHS Class of 1961 met on Friday December 5, 2025 for their monthly meeting, always having a good time.

Brent Study Club members had a delightful time on Saturday, December 6, 2025 with a Christmas luncheon at the GFWC Foster House in Birmingham. The house was beautiful, all enjoyed a delicious lunch and played dirty Santa.

The Joyful Hearts of Brent Baptist Church met on Monday, December 8, 2025.

Birthday wishes go out to several that have birthdays in December, Bo Boykin, Jimmy McSpadden, Steven Bowman, Hannah Daniel, Jerry Pow, Taylor Caffee, Betty Walker, Misty Tilleryt, Harry Ingram, Florence Shuttlesworth, Katherine Cottingham, Marla Suttle and Andrea Suttle.

Anniversary wishes go out to Mike and Scottie Watts who celebrated their 47th wedding anniversary on Tuesday, December 9, 2025.

On Wednesday, December 10 some BCHS from classes 1966-69 gathered at the home of Charlotte Lovelady West for lunch and a game of dirty santa, and other crazy games. Each brought a dish and they had a feast, all was scrumptious. A great time was had by all.

Anniversary wishes go out to M.C. and Marti Watts who celebrated their wedding anniversary on December 20, 2025.

West Eoline News

By Jane Hannah

Jo Kitchen stayed two weeks in Jacksonville visiting Family before Christmas. Her car was loaded down with baked goodies for each home. She is the QUEEN of peanut brittle making, peanut butter balls and pecan pies.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY January 2nd Watson & Caroline Fondren ... A lot of changes in FIVE years!! CONGRATULATIONS HEALTH NEWS: Amy Ellison is in rehab at BMC after hip removal.

Ronnie Kinney has been diagnosed with GIST cancer again. Prayers please for these

SYMPATHY: My heart hurts for my cousin Judy Deason Ohme and husband Vince in the recent loss of their daughter Yolanda. The BIG C took her way too soon. They are Nebraska residents. Evelyn Othelle Clark Everett passed away at age 97 in Chattanooga, TN area on 12-18-25. She was the last of my parent's generation of siblings and in-laws.

Anniversary wishes go out to Paul and Hilary Perry who recently celebrated their 22nd wedding anniversary.

Charlotte Lovelady West and Pam Ragland Long recently visited with Joe and Connie Lightsey. Afterwards they enjoyed dinner at Cracker Barrel.

Sympathy goes out to the family of Jackie Horton, 84, who passed away on December 11, 2025. Services were held on Monday December 15, 2025 at New Life Baptist Church with burial in Pineland Memorial Park. Jackie will be missed greatly by family and friends.

We wish to extend sympathy to the family of Janet Joyt who passed away on December 15, 2025. Graveside services were held on Monday, December 22, 2025 at Little Hope Primitive Baptist Church Cemetery. Janet will be greatly missed by her family and friends.

Birthday wishes go out to Jeff Pierce, Katherine Campos and George Levert, they celebrate their birthdays in December.

Anniversary wishes go out to Lesland and Nicole Clinker who recently celebrated their 9th wedding anniversary.

Belated birthday wishes go out to Layton Seales who celebrated his birthday on Thursday, December 18, 2025.

If you have news call it in at 205.316.1181. Take care and God Bless. Merry Christmas.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY in January: Chelsea Sanders 1-2, Joyce Collins, Teresa James & Denise McMillan 1-3, Cody Turner 1-4, Gene Caddis 1-8, Evie Jo Dowdle, Wes Thompson & Jay White 1-9, Amy Hatter 1-10, Elizabeth Mathis & Carla Mobley 1-11, Fran McGee 1-12, Daniel Kitchen & Faye Johnson 1-13, Pat Murphy 1-15, Barbara Kornegay 1-16, Gary Hannah & Delainey Garner 1-17, Jean E. Hubbard & Dale Ellinghausen 1-18, Danny McMillan 1-19, Michael Vessels Jr. 1-21, Jerry Conway, Amy Mathis & Carolyn Tubbs 1-22, Bianca Hannah 1-23, Brittney Ervin, Dylan Dowdle, & Jeremy Ervin 1-24, Luke Holladay, Eddie Dial, & Ricky Deavers 1-25, Jack Meigs 1-28, Joan Hannah, Kailin Simmons, Wayne Rinehart, & Cathy Hall 1-29, Kade Ingram & Donna Hubbard 1-30, Tami Doty 1-31.

HAPPY NEW YEAR 2026!!

Learn How to Create a Turkey Habitat at Upcoming Extension Workshop

CREATING A TURKEY HABITAT

AND WILD GAME PREPARATION

JANUARY 15, 2026
6:00PM - 8:00PM

MT. CARMEL BAPTIST CHURCH
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Join the us as we teach you how to create a habitat that will attract turkeys to your property and talk about how to prepare your wild game.

REGISTER HERE: [HTTPS://BIT.LY/40RODBP](https://bit.ly/40RODBP)

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System is an equal opportunity educator, employer, and provider. If you need a reasonable accommodation or free language access services, contact Lynn Dickinson at 334-303-8360



BY SAVANNA LOGAN
REPORTER

Residents interested in wildlife conservation, land management, and wild game preparation are invited to attend an upcoming educational program, Creating a Turkey Habitat and Wild Game Preparation, hosted by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. The event will take place on January 15, 2026, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Mt. Carmel Baptist Church, located at 5860 Truman Aldrich Parkway in West Blocton.

This informative workshop will focus on practical strategies for creating and maintaining habitat that attracts wild turkeys to private property. Participants will learn about habitat needs, land management techniques, and ways to support healthy turkey populations year-round. In addition to habitat education, the program will also cover the basics of wild game preparation, offering helpful guidance for

those interested in responsibly utilizing harvested game.

The registration fee for the event is \$10, and space may be limited. Those interested are encouraged to register in advance at <https://bit.ly/40RODBP>. This program is ideal for landowners, hunters, outdoor enthusiasts, and anyone curious about wildlife management and sustainable practices.

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System is an equal opportunity educator, employer, and provider. Individuals who require reasonable accommodations or free language access services are encouraged to contact Lynn Dickinson at 334-303-8360 prior to the event.

This workshop provides a valuable opportunity to gain hands-on knowledge, ask questions, and connect with others who share an interest in wildlife stewardship and sustainable game practices.

A New Year, A New Path: Become a Certified Nursing Assistant in Just Weeks through BMC

BY SAVANNA LOGAN
REPORTER

A new year often brings fresh goals, renewed motivation, and the courage to step into something new. For those ready to make a meaningful career change in 2026, Bibb Medical Center is offering an opportunity that can be both life-changing and deeply impactful: the chance to become a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) in just a few weeks.

The upcoming CNA program begins January 12, 2026, providing a fast-paced, hands-on pathway into the healthcare field. Designed for individuals who feel called to help others and want a career with purpose, this program equips students with essential skills needed to support patients, families, and healthcare teams every day.

Applications for the program will be accepted during the December 17–31, 2025 application period, giving prospective students time to reflect, prepare, and take a confident step forward as the new year begins. Interested applicants can apply online at bibbmed.com/education.

Classes will be held at the BMC Wellness Center, offering a professional and supportive learning environment led by experienced instructors. Students will gain practical knowledge, real-world training, and the confidence

needed to enter a field where compassion, reliability, and human connection truly matter.

Becoming a Certified Nursing Assistant isn't just about starting a new job – it's about stepping into a role that makes a difference. CNAs are often the heart of patient care, providing comfort, assistance,

and dignity to those who need it most. For many, this role becomes the foundation for a long-term healthcare career or a fulfilling vocation rooted in service.

Those with questions or seeking more information are encouraged to reach out by email at bmchr@bibbmedicalcenter.com.

As 2026 approaches, this program offers more than training – it offers empowerment, stability, and the chance to build a future centered on care and impact. For anyone ready to turn a new year into a new beginning, this could be the moment to take that first step.

BECOME A CERTIFIED NURSING ASSISTANT

IN JUST A FEW WEEKS

Our Program

- Class begins January 12th, 2026
- Application Period: December 17th–31st, 2025
- Apply online: bibbmed.com/education
- Location: BMC Wellness Center

Contact Us

BMCHR@BIBBMEDICALCENTER.COM

EDITORIALS & OPINIONS

Democratic Candidate Qualifying dates for the 2026 election were set by the Bibb County Democratic Executive Committee to begin Monday, January 5, 2026 at 9.am, and end Friday, January 23, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. in accordance with Alabama election law.

Candidates seeking a County spot .on the Democratic Primary ballot must qualify with County Chairwoman Joyce Rice. The Cour:1ty ballot positions include Sheriff, County Commissioner Districts 2 and 4, Tax Assesor/Collector, and Board of Education Dist. 1. candidates for Bibb County Execu-tive Committee must qualify for a 4-year term also.

Contact Information: Joyce Rice, 205-217-3505 Email: joycerice65@gmail.com

A Look Back at the Alabama Political Stories that Made the Headlines in 2025

By Paul DeMarco

As we look back at the past year, there were a lot of political stories that made headlines in 2025.

Probably the biggest political story from 2025 was the decision by United States Senator Tommy Tuberville to leave his seat in Congress to run to be Alabama Governor. With Governor Kay Ivey term-limited, it was expected that Lieutenant Governor Will Ainsworth or Attorney General Steve Marshal would announce that they were seeking to be the state's next top executive, but now Senator Tuberville is the prohibitive favorite to succeed Ivey.

Also noteworthy was the impact President Donald Trump taking the helm at the White House has had on Alabama. As expected, President Trump has been good to the state. A lot of federal resources are moving to Alabama, such as the U.S. Space Command, Fannie Mae offices, and more FBI facilities. The President has an excellent relationship with the state's federal delegation and his policies are benefiting the state.

Unfortunately, there was also unsettling news from the criminal justice system and public safety front that got the attention of state leaders - a mass shooting in Montgomery, a child sex trafficking ring in Bibb County and a failure by the state Department of Human Resources that led to the death of a child in Jefferson County. Add to all of that, the state parole board underwent new leadership that is now releasing violent felons over the objections of crime victims .

Economic news has been big in Alabama in 2025. Record breaking investment and job creation across the state has been good in both big cities and rural areas. From aviation to auto manufacturing and biomedical, the state's manufacturing sector is the envy of the Nation as it continues to grow. Major announcements are leading to millions of dollars flowing to Alabama and that will be good for Alabama families.

This past fall the Port of Mobile officially became the deepest container port in the Gulf of America. The completion of dredging, created a 50-foot channel depth, making the deeper channel able to handle more capacity for more ship traffic. This will mean additional cargo flowing to Alabama and the port will allow more ships come to the state to deliver products at a more efficient capacity.

Now as we approach 2026, we will watch most of these stories carry over into the new year as well.

Paul DeMarco is a former member of the Alabama House of Representatives and can be found on X at @Paul_DeMarco

Kay Ivey is a Legacy Governor

Inside the Statehouse

By Steve Flowers

December 24, 2025:

Recently, I had several of Governor Kay Ivey's closest friends and confidantes invite me to visit with them. Over lunch, they posed the question to me, "Do you think Governor Ivey has become a legacy governor?" My response was that she has been an outstanding governor, but I need to give some thought to the meaning of a "legacy" governor.

My perception over the years was that a legacy governor left an indelible, particular generational project that could be linked to their name for posterity. My memory of governors only goes back 60 years and there are only three or four who have left that specific mark.

Our larger-than-life political giant of a governor, James E. "Big Jim" Folsom, paved all the rural roads in the state, so that the small farmers who lived on dirt roads could get their produce they cultivated all year to the market. His creation of the Farm to Market Road Program gives him a legacy.

Big Jim's son, Jim Folsom Jr., was governor for only three years, but he created a legacy as the Father of the Automotive Factory Boom in our state. His landing the Mercedes Plant for Alabama was the impetus for making us the second largest automobile manufacturing state in America. It is now one of the largest economic engines in our state.

Governor George Wallace has numerous legacies. He is the most profound political figure in Alabama history. He was elected governor four times and his wife, Lurleen, another. That record will never be matched. During those terms, he created a legacy in economic development and roads. Probably his greatest accomplishment was the creation of the Alabama Community College System, which has become the mainstay for job creation and workforce development in the last decade for our state.

Governor Fob James could be called a legacy governor. He was elected governor two times, and not consecutively. He has the unique distinction of being elected governor in 1978 as a Democrat and again in 1990 as a Republican. Fob has a legacy as governor of having the businessman's insight to create a trust fund for the General Fund Budget. During his first term an abundance of oil reserves were discovered off Alabama's Gulf Coast. The state sold the oil rights to these reserves for a good amount of money. Fob convinced the legislature to save and preserve the corpus of the oil money in a "rainy day" fund entitled the Heritage Trust Fund. It has been a salvation for the beleaguered General Fund for years.

After several weeks of contemplating the question of whether Kay Ivey is a legacy governor, my response is a resounding and enthusiastic yes. Kay Ivey, in my estimation, is the best governor I have seen in my years of following and writing about Alabama political history.

First, Governor Kay Ivey will have been governor for a decade when she leaves office in January 2027. She will have been governor longer than anyone in state history other than George Wallace. She is also the first female elected governor in her own right. In addition, she is the first female Republican governor in history.

Most legacy governors have created their places in history through roads, as is the case with Wallace and Big Jim. Therefore, Kay Ivey knew that roads were the economic engine that drives the growth of jobs and economic expansion. She took the bull by the horns early in her tenure and did a masterful job of corralling the votes in the legislature and stewarding the passage of a gasoline tax increase to maintain and sustain our state roads, bridges, and waterways in Alabama.

This legislation, entitled "Rebuild Alabama," which passed in 2019, has generated over \$1 billion in revenue, paving the way for 500 new road and bridge projects reaching all 67 counties. This long overdue generational improvement of our state's aging roads, bridge system, and state docks is a legacy in itself.

This infrastructure program has led to another Kay Ivey legacy in economic development. Governor Ivey's administration has spearheaded a record breaking \$55 billion in new capital investment and the creation of over 93,000 jobs during her tenure as governor. Furthermore, Governor Ivey's appointments have been sterling and judicious, especially her judicial appointments.

The most important thing that can be said about Kay Ivey's decade as Governor is that she has been a steady "Captain" of the Ship of State. She has brought stability, honesty and integrity to Alabama government. She is solid as a rock. Maybe she should be referred to as "Captain Ivey," rather than "Meemaw."

Kay Ivey is a legacy governor.

See you next week.

Steve Flowers is Alabama's leading political columnist. His weekly column appears in over 60 Alabama newspapers. He served 16 years in the state legislature. Steve may be reached at steve@steveflowers.us.



Centreville Press

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OUR GOAL: The Centreville Press is published proudly for the citizens of Bibb County and adjoining counties by Bibb Community Media, Inc., Centreville, AL. Our Goal is to produce quality, profitable, community-oriented newspapers that you, our readers, are proud of. We will reach that goal through hard work, teamwork, loyalty and a strong dedication towards printing the truth.

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Deer Creek Missionary Baptist Church Centreville 225-0460	BIBLE Grace Bible Woodstock 938-7763	Spencer Church Of The Nazarene Brent
Ebenzer Baptist Church Brierfield 665-4865	CATHOLIC Church Of The Holy Spirit Tuscaloosa 553-9733	PENTECOSTAL New Life West Blocton Pastor Greg Brock 205.441.2809
Enon Baptist Centreville 926-4517	St. Thomas The Apostle Church Montevallo 663-3936	First United Pentecostal Church of Centreville
Eoline Baptist Eoline 926-7448	CHRISTIAN Marvel Christian Union Montevallo 345-7018	PRESBYTERIAN Brent Presbyterian P.C.A. 926-4722
Faith Baptist West Blocton 938-7220	CHURCH OF CHRIST Centreville Church Of Christ 926-LOVE	Centreville First Presbyterian P.C.A. 926-4261
First Baptist Church of Woodstock 205-938-7479	North Bibb Church of Christ Woodstock 477-6121	Green Pond Presbyterian Presbyterian Church Rd 205-938-2344
Four Points Baptist Centreville 926-7775	West Blocton Church of Christ West Blocton 938-7108	Pleasant Hill Upper Cum- berland Presbyterian Church Centreville 926-4409
Green Pond Baptist Green Pond 938-7769	Evangelist Temple Brent 926-6430	SEVENTH DAY ADVEN- TIST First Brent Seventh Day Adventist 926-6328
Haysop Baptist Centreville 205-310-1316	CHURCH OF GOD Church of God of Proph- ecy at Eoline 256-393-9625 Pastor Shane Pate	NON-DENOMINATIONAL Fellowship Community 926-6800
Hopewell Primitive Baptist West Blocton 553-7603	Church Of God Of Proph- ecy West Blocton 938-2788	Scottsville Union Church Co. Rd. 9 Scottsville 205-503-6096
Johntown Baptist West Blocton 938-7621	Caffee Junction Church Of God 205-477-5468	Victory Tabernacle Church 1008 Walnut Street • Centreville 926-9455 or 361-2763 Pastor Butch Tucker
Liberty Baptist West Blocton 938-2090	River of Life Church of God 9225 Hwy 82, Brent 205-926-7600	Yahweh's Harvest 926-9044
Liberty Baptist Duncanville 759-9647 / 759-4074	West Blocton Church of God Cty Rd. 21 Smith Hill 205-966-4988	The Refreshing Place Church 24865 Hwy. 5 Woodstock, AL 35188 Pastor Wayne Keeton
Liberty Freewill Baptist 926-6496	CHURCH OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST 2300 South Scottsville Rd Centreville 926-5393	God's House of Prayer 489 Co. Rd. 162 (Heiberg- er) Marion, AL 36756 334-683-4933 Every Sunday 11:00 a.m.
Little Hope Primitive Bap- tist Centreville 926-4236	EPISCOPAL The Church Of The Holy Comforter Montevallo 665-2769	Sandy Chapel Community Church 926-4934
Lowerytown Baptist West Blocton 938-2436	St. Andrews Episcopal Church 925 Plowman Street Montevallo 665-1667	
Lucille Baptist West Blocton 966-3556	HOLINESS Deliverance Temple Holi- ness Four Points 926-5565	
Mission Baptist Woodstock 938-7096	Word of Faith Worship Center Centreville 926-4555	
Mt. Carmel Baptist West Blocton 938-2379	Free Will Apostolic Holi- ness Antioch 926-9252	
Mt. Ebell Baptist Brent 926-9223	Real Truth Holiness Church 646 S. Scottsville Road Brent 926-5009	
Mt. Grove Baptist 938-3410	Trinity Spirit Holiness Church Centreville 926-4321	
Mt. Moriah Baptist West Blocton 926-5425		
Mt. Pilgrim Baptist Church Brent 926-9009		
Mt. Tabor Baptist Brent 926-7156		
Mt. Zion Baptist Centreville 334-366-5903		
New Hebron Baptist West Blocton 938-2101		
New Hope Missionary Baptist Randolph 334-366-1199		
New Life Baptist Church Centreville 205-541-7072		
New Pleasant Valley Brent 926-9045		
Pinegrove Missionary Baptist		



“Sweet Beulah Land” (not to be confused with the older hymn of a similar name, “Beulah Land”) continues to be a hymn that is beloved by many. Written by Squire Parsons, he originally started penning the song in the year 1973 by writing the first verse after being stricken with the beauty of a simple drive to his teaching job. Once his vehicle topped a mountain, he was met with the full, brilliant sun and all its glory. As soon as he arrived at the school where he taught, Parsons scribbled down the lyrics that had filled his head on the drive in. That first verse to “Sweet Beulah Land” sat alone for five years before he penned the second verse and a chorus sometime in the in between.

When Parsons recorded the song in 1979, he scarcely believed then that it would get the attention that it did. Once the song was released, it launched him into the ministry of traveling as a gospel singer and songwriter. In the year 1981, it became a #1 hit on Christian genre charts and was even voted Song of the Year by the Singing News Fan Awards. Over the years it has been recorded many times by a whole host of artists, including The Chuck Wagon Gang, Lynda Randall, the Gaither Vocal Band, and Jason Crabb.

“Beulah” is another one of those words – you know, the ones that you hear over and over across your life, until one day it just strikes you that you have no idea what it actually means. Well, the term “beulah” is taken Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress, where it referred to it as “the peaceful land in which the pilgrim awaits the call to the Celestial City,” or in other words, essentially another term for what we imagine heaven to be.

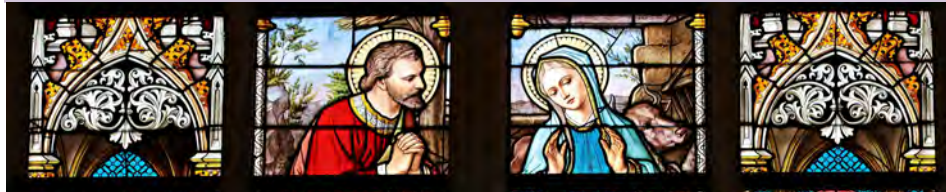
It’s no secret that our hearts are hardwired to long for a place in the eternal to call our home. Eloquently spoken by renowned theologian C.S. Lewis, he once said, “If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most prob-

able explanation is that we were made for another world.”

I don’t know about you, but I think that God has enabled us to see the smallest of snippets of the “sweet beulah land” in the world all around us every day – that is, if we look for it and ask God to open our eyes to be able to see it. Have you ever seen a sunset that just leaves you in awe? Well, as the psalmist writes in Psalm 19:1-4, “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the works of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.”

I am not of the belief that we should limit God to being able to communicate with us only with words. In fact, I have always been one that can sense the presence of the Lord more closely in a hayfield than I ever can within the walls of a church. Being surrounded by God’s creation, seeing how every smallest detail was ordained at the beginnings of time from the tiniest of ants crawling across the ground to the sway of a million leaves in a big gust of wind, I find it repeatedly impossible to deny the existence of my God. Paul in Romans 1:20 puts it quite nicely when he wrote, “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.”

I both challenge and encourage you to ask God to speak to your heart and reveal His glory to you this week – and I have a hunch you’ll be amazed at what you see.



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And when it comes to shining the light on government, public notices deliver.

The Alabama Press Association proudly salutes our newspapers for their commitment to community journalism.

*Newspapers, such as this one, are the cornerstone of an open and transparent government, and the #1 source of local news and information.**

We wish you continued success in the coming year.

* The Alabama State Study, 2022; Conducted by Coda Ventures

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NEWS

2026 Election Cycle Begins

The Alabama Republican Party will open candidate qualifying for the 2026 election cycle on Monday, January 5, 2026, marking the formal start of a campaign season that will determine control of Alabama's top state and federal offices.

Qualifying will begin at 8:30 a.m. and remain open through Friday, January 23, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.

ALGOP Chairman John Wahl said the upcoming election cycle will be critical to Alabama's future, as Republicans look to maintain their strong statewide presence while preparing for competitive primaries.

"The 2026 election will play a major role in shaping the direction of our state," Wahl said. "This qualifying period is the first step for candidates who want to be part of that future and who are willing to step forward and lead."

Republicans currently hold a supermajority in the Alabama Legislature and every statewide constitutional office. Wahl said maintaining that level of leadership is essential to continued progress.

"I want to see Alabama lead the nation in conservative policy. As one of the most conservative states in the country, we should be setting the standard on tax reform, economic growth, defending individual liberty, and protecting our children from a socialist agenda," he said. "That mission begins by not only preserving but expanding our Republican supermajority with candidates who will fight unapologetically for freedom, faith, and conservative principles."

Offices on the ballot in the 2026 election include:

- U.S. Senate
- U.S. House of Representatives
- Governor
- Lieutenant Governor
- Attorney General
- Secretary of State
- Auditor
- Treasurer
- Commissioner of Agriculture and Industry

- Public Service Commissioner
- Court of Appeals (Civil and Criminal)
- Member of the State Board of Education
- Circuit Court Judge
- District Court Judge
- Alabama State Senator
- Alabama House of Representatives

Candidates may complete qualifying online at algotp.org/2026-candidate-qualifying or in person at Alabama Republican Party Headquarters, 3505 Lorna Road, Hoover, AL 35216.

County-level offices, including county commissioners, sheriffs, and coroners, do not qualify through ALGOP headquarters. Candidates seeking those positions must qualify with their local county Republican Party organization. Contact information for county GOP chairmen is available on the ALGOP website by selecting "Find a Local GOP."

Prospective candidates are encouraged to complete all required filings before qualifying with the Party. Those include filing a Statement of Economic Interest with the Alabama Ethics Commission (available online at <https://seiform.alabama.gov>) and forming a Principal Campaign Committee with the Alabama Secretary of State's Office (available online at <https://fcpa.albamavotes.gov>). Party officials warn that failure to complete these steps in a timely manner could result in disqualification.

Key dates for the 2026 election cycle include:

- ALGOP Primary Election: Tuesday, May 19, 2026
- ALGOP Primary Runoff Election: Tuesday, June 16, 2026
- General Election: Tuesday, November 3, 2026

Candidates or members of the public seeking additional information may contact the Alabama Republican Party at 205-212-5900.

Courtesy of ALGOP

Alabama State Games Return June 12–14, 2026, Bringing Competition, Community, and Scholarship Opportunities

BY SAVANNAH LOGAN
REPORTER

The Alabama State Games will return June 12–14, 2026, marking an exciting milestone for athletes across the state and beyond. As an Olympic-style, multi-sport event, the Alabama State Games are open to athletes of all ages and skill levels, offering a unique opportunity to compete, connect, and celebrate the spirit of sportsmanship.

Now in its 43rd year, the Alabama State Games continue to grow, and 2026 is set to be the largest event in the Games' history. This year's competition holds added significance as it coincides with the nation's celebration of its 250th birthday, making it a momentous occasion for participants and spectators alike.

One of the most impactful aspects of the Alabama State Games is its commitment to

supporting athletes beyond the field of play. Each year during the Opening Ceremony, between \$40,000 and \$50,000 in scholarships are awarded to registered athletes through a scholarship drawing. No additional qualifications are required, and these scholarships may be used at any two-year, four-year, trade, or technical school – helping athletes invest in their futures both academically and professionally, even possibly athletes right here in Bibb County.

The State Games are also expanding their reach, inviting athletes from Bibb County and surrounding communities to take part in this statewide celebration of competition and opportunity. With dozens of sports offered, from traditional team sports to individual and emerging events, there



SAVE THE DATE JUNE 12-14, 2026

ALABAMA STATE GAMES
SCHOLARSHIP
OPPORTUNITIES

ATHLETES WHO REGISTER FOR THE ALABAMA STATE GAMES AND ATTEND OPENING CEREMONY ARE ENTERED INTO A SCHOLARSHIP DRAWING. SCHOLARSHIPS ARE AWARDED AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE STATE FARM ATHLETE LEADERSHIP SUMMIT AND OPENING CEREMONY. THE ASF FOUNDATION HAS AWARDED 647 SCHOLARSHIPS FOR NEARLY \$460,000. THESE SCHOLARSHIPS CAN BE USED AT ANY 2-YEAR, 4-YEAR, TRADE, OR TECHNICAL SCHOOL.

ALAGAMES.COM

Alabama State Games Potential Sports Slate

- Archery
- Billiards*
- Base Fishing*
- Baseball
- Baton Twirling & Color Guard*
- Beach Volleyball
- Bowling
- Chess*
- Class
- Disc Golf
- Diving
- Dragon Boats*
- Equestrian
- Futsal*
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- Softball - Slowpitch*
- Shooting Sports
- Swimming
- Table Tennis
- Tennis
- Track & Field
- Ultimate Frisbee
- Wrestling
- Wrestling Duals

* New for 2026

Katie Britt presses AI companies to improve transparency, commit to timely and consistent safety disclosure

U.S. Sen. Katie Britt (R-Montgomery) continues to sound the alarm about how Big Tech companies aren't doing enough to protect vulnerable children online.

Britt and several of her colleagues sent letters this week that called on leading artificial intelligence (AI) companies to improve transparency around the capabilities of their models and the risks they pose to users.

In letters to OpenAI, Microsoft, Google, Anthropic, Meta, Luka, Character.AI, and xAI, the Senators highlighted reports of AI chatbots encouraging dangerous behavior among children, including suicidal ideation and self-harm, and requested commitments to timely, consistent disclosures around model releases as well as long-term research into chatbots' impacts on the emotional and psychological wellbeing of users.

"If AI companies struggle to predict and mitigate relatively well-understood risks, it raises concerns about their ability to manage more complex risks," the senators wrote. "While we have been encouraged by the arrival of overdue safety measures for certain chatbots, these must be accompanied by improved public self-reporting so that consumers, families, educators, and policymakers can make informed decisions around appropriate use."

Britt has been on the forefront of this issue, recently introducing measures such as the Kids Off Social Media Act and the Stop the Scroll Act. Britt also recently questioned experts and parents of sextortion victims during a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing, reiterating her push to hold social media platforms accountable.

"Public disclosure reports, such as AI model and system cards, serve as the closest equivalent to nutrition labels for AI models," the senators continued. "While they are essential public transparency tools, today's changed landscape calls for assessing current best practices and how they can be better responsive to user risks ... Companies must continue to monitor their model performance and publicly disclose new developments as they relate to security and user safety. This information enables third-party evaluators to assess a model's risks and supports organizations, governments, and consumers in making more informed decisions."

The letter was also signed by Sens. James Lankford (R-Okla.), Chris Coons (D-Del.), and Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii).

Britt discussed the dangers of AI and social media on Fox News last week as well.

"And I think when you look at what's happening right now with our kids, ages 13 to 17, they have said they actually feel more negative, feel more depressed—almost 50% of them admit to that after being on social media ... [T]he previous Surgeon General said kids shouldn't be on social media until they're 16. Now is the time to act," she said. "But the truth is, is Big Tech has a grip on Congress, and Congress' inaction is feckless. I do not have to ask people what it is like to raise kids right now, I am living it. And we know the harms, and it is our job to put up the proper guardrails so that these kids can flourish."

Governor Ivey forms advisory group for \$50 billion rural health investment as Alabama awaits approval

Governor Kay Ivey signed an order on Thursday creating the Alabama Rural Health Transformation Advisory Group.

"The creation of the [Group] will enable Alabama to hit the ground running once the state's new comprehensive rural healthcare strategy is greenlighted," said Governor Ivey.

"The members of this group will help ensure our programs initiate positive transformations to the way Alabamians receive quality healthcare."

The group is comprised of five members of the Alabama Senate and five members of the Alabama House

of Representatives as selected by the governor.

Additionally, the director of the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) shall serve as a member, as well as the division chief of ADECA's Federal Initiatives and Recreation Division (or the Division administering ARHTP), who shall serve as secretary.

Gov. Ivey has selected the following officials to serve as advisory group members:

- Speaker Nathaniel Ledbetter (R-Rainville)
- Senate Pro Tem Garlan Gudger (R-Cullman)

- State Sen. Greg Albritton (R-Atmore)
- State Sen. Clyde Chambliss (R-Prattville)
- State Sen. Donnie Chesteen (R-Geneva)
- Senate Minority Leader Bobby Singleton (D-Greensboro)
- House Minority Leader Anthony Daniels (D-Huntsville)
- State Rep. Jamie Kiel (R-Russellville)
- State Rep. Rex Reynolds (R-Huntsville)
- State Rep. Pebble Warren (D-Tuskegee)
- Alabama's ARHTP is built around 11 coordinated initiatives intended to stabilize rural facilities, expand access, and improve outcomes, with

a heavy emphasis on telehealth, shared services, and workforce development.

- Those include:
- Shared EHR/IT/cybersecurity support for rural providers
- A statewide telehealth/tele-consult network Maternal & fetal digital regionalization (including telerobotic ultrasound)
- A rural workforce initiative
- Cancer digital regionalization and screening expansion
- Expanded simulation training
- Statewide EMS trauma and stroke routing improvements
- An EMS "treat-in-place" pilot to reduce unnecessary ER bur-

- den
- Behavioral health expansion (including school-based telemental health and CCBHC growth)
- Community medicine outreach (mobile wellness and nutrition)
- A rural health practice track (including dental access)
- The One Big Beautiful Bill Act, includes a multi-year, \$50 billion federal Rural Health Transformation Program that empowers states to strengthen rural communities across America by improving healthcare access, quality and outcomes by transforming the healthcare delivery system.
- In November, in

compliance with the federal law, Governor Ivey announced that Alabama's Rural Health Transformation Program plan was submitted to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) for approval.

According to her office, Governor Ivey also sought input from dozens of stakeholders around the state and established a 20-person workgroup of healthcare experts and lawmakers to help inform the process and develop the plan.

Funding awards from CMS are expected to be announced by the end of the year.

The BACK PAGE

First Day Hikes at Alabama State Parks offer chance to see sunrise, sunset and everything in between

As part of the National First Day Hike Program, which includes events in all 50 states, Alabama's hikes offer a meaningful way to welcome the new year. From peaceful forest trails to sweeping vistas, each hike showcases the beauty and diversity of Alabama's great outdoors.

The First Day Hikes also celebrate The Year of Alabama Trails, a statewide initiative led by the Alabama Tourism Department that celebrates the state's network of trails and invites adventurers of all ages to explore Alabama's most scenic landscapes.

Volunteers and park personnel lead the First Day Hikes inside Alabama State Parks. Hikers of all ages and skill levels are invited to ring in the new year by immersing themselves in Alabama's stunning natural beauty in a low-stress, family-friendly environment.

A complete list of First Day Hikes at Alabama State Parks can be found online at alapark.com/first-day-hikes-2026, and hikers can reserve their spot by making an online reservation.

Winter weather could impact outdoor plans. Registering in advance ensures you'll receive real-time



The First Day Hike Sunset Hike at Cheaha State Park follows the Pulpit Rock Trail, which offers panoramic views of the Talladega National Forest. (Photo by Josh Bean | Alabama State Parks)

updates and important notifications about your selected hike.

To make the most of your experience, park officials recommend bringing plenty of water or a sports drink, snacks or meals as needed, and hiking poles if desired. Dress for the season and wear sturdy, closed-toe shoes or hiking boots to stay comfortable on the trail.

First Day Hikes are free with daily Alabama State Park ad-

mission, where applicable, to make it a family-friendly activity to begin the new year.

Lake Guntersville State Park, Cheaha State Park, Chewacla State Park and DeSoto State Park are offering two First Day Hikes each, and online reservations are available for all First Day Hikes.

For hikers seeking overnight accommodations before or after participating in a First Day Hike, online

reservations for lodge rooms, chalets, cabins and campgrounds can be made online at Alapark.com through the "Plan Your Alabama State Parks Adventure Online" portal. Joe Wheeler State Park is also hosting a New Year's Eve Party on Dec. 31, complete with food and live music, and Lake Guntersville State Park also offers a New Year's Eve package.

"There's no better way to start the new

year than by lacing up your hiking boots and getting your family into nature," Alabama State Parks Director Matthew Capps said. "It's the perfect way to start 2026 on the right foot."

About Alabama's State Parks System

The Alabama State Parks is a division of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and maintains state parks encompassing more than 50,000

acres of land and water in Alabama. The parks range from Gulf Coast beaches to Appalachian Mountains and provide opportunities and facilities from basic day-use activities to resort convention lodging, restaurants and golfing areas. These parks rely on visitor fees and the support of other partners like local communities to fund the majority of their operations. Learn more at alapark.com.



Happy
New Year
Bibb Medical Center

As we step into 2026, we reflect on the privilege of serving our community with care, compassion, and dedication. We are incredibly grateful for your trust and partnership throughout the past year.

In the year ahead, we remain committed to providing you and your loved ones with the highest standard of care, support, and healing. May 2026 bring you good health, happiness, and hope.

Here's to a year filled with health, recovery, and new beginnings.

With warmest wishes,

