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Ray Hayes receives doctorate of humane letters

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

Former University of Alabama System Chancellor Ray Hayes on Saturday received a doctorate of humane letters awarded by the board of trustees in honor of his 12 years of service to the system.

"I am deeply honored to receive the honorary doctorate from the University of Alabama," Hayes said. "It has been a privilege to serve the UA System as chancellor, and I look forward to my continued work in behavioral health and other initiatives that will positively impact our students, their families and the citizens of Alabama."

Hayes announced plans in June to step down at the end of July as chancellor to focus on working on projects, including behavioral health and health care initiatives.

The board decided to award Hayes a doctorate of humane letters and named him a chancellor emeritus in June following the announcement of his plans.

"Last evening, several members of this board had the opportunity to express to Chancellor Hayes and the first lady the appreciation of the board and commended them for what this family has meant to our system. Today, we want to award to our chancellor the highest honor," Trustee Joe Espy said.

Hayes received the doctorate during graduation ceremonies at Coleman Coliseum. The university awarded degrees to 1,450 students.

Hayes was appointed chancellor in 2016. Before becoming chancellor, Hayes served as executive vice chancellor since 2013. He was hired in 2006 as the vice chancellor for financial affairs overseeing the system's budgeting process, investments, capital plan and other financial affairs.

Trustee Finis St. John IV is serving as the interim chancellor while the system's board looks for a permanent replacement for Hayes.

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Inside
For more photos from the UA graduation ceremony, see Page B10.

Online
To see more photos and video from the summer ceremony, visit www.tuscaloosanews.com.
Attorney says the complaint is related to a staff meeting at city hall

Erin Edgemon  edgemon@al.com

The Alabama Ethics Commission on Wednesday found former Birmingham Mayor William Bell violated state ethics law.

The commission said there’s evidence to show Bell committed a minor violation of the ethics law. The body recommended the case be handled administratively and referred it to the Jefferson County District Attorney Office.

The ethics commission hasn’t disclosed the nature of the complaint or the evidence it reviewed.

Commission Executive Director Tom Albritton stated in an email to AL.com that he could not comment on the violation.

Bell’s attorney, Joe Espy, said the complaint was in relation to a meeting Bell held with staff at city hall last August during his bid for re-election as mayor.

"Mayor Bell completely cooperated with the ethics commission and the ethics commission staff," Espy said. "It was a very minor technical matter related to that complaint made during the campaign about that meeting."

"It was resolved administratively. It is concluded."

Espy said the matter was already forwarded to the district attorney, who is expected to sign off on the resolution of the case. He said the case will then go back to the ethics commission, which might issue a fine.

Birmingham activist Iva Williams filed the ethics complaint against Bell over a mayoral campaign-related meeting at city hall in which Bell warned employees they could be out of a job if he wasn’t re-elected.

Williams accused Bell of using his office for personal gain. He also claimed the mayor violated state law by using his official position for political activities and by using city facilities for political activities.

An audio recording of the meeting was released to members of the media in September.

In the mandatory meeting held in the City Council chambers Aug. 28, 2017, Bell told staff they couldn’t campaign during work hours. He also asked staff to tell residents of the progress being made in the city and “magnify” his voice in the community.

"The political survival of my administration is at stake," Bell told the group, per the recording. "And if you think that is just about William Bell, no, it is about everyone in this room. It is about each of us in this room. Because I guarantee you while some may survive, the vast majority of you will not. OK. I’m not trying to put fear I’m just trying to tell you the realities of the situation."

On the recording, Bell doesn’t explicitly ask staff members to campaign for him during the meeting.

"Now, what do I need from you? It is improper for you to campaign during working hours," he said. "I am not asking you to do that, but what I am asking you to do when you are at work — do your job professionally. Reach out to citizens. Whatever they need try to meet them as immediately as possible. Don’t get into any arguments with people, but try to satisfy whatever their needs are. That’s the best thing you can do to help me while you are on duty."

Bell tells staff members to be professional to residents. He also asks them to "tell the true story" of his leadership and the progress going on in the city.

April Odom, who at the time was spokesperson for the mayor’s office, told AL.com in September that the meeting wasn’t a "campaign meeting." She said it was a meeting to "address the widespread information that was being put out."

"After the election we were inundated with requests from staff on how they could help," she stated in an email at the time. "We had a staff meeting where the mayor clearly outlined what was acceptable and not acceptable."

Bell lost his bid for re-election to Randall Woodfin.
German economic development exec on Bham's assets, site selection and more

By: Hanno van der Bijl

Ever since Mercedes-Benz put down roots in Tuscaloosa County in 1993, Alabama has seen increased investment from German manufacturing and logistics companies.

A lot of those deals are built on close relationships formed between site selectors, companies, economic development leaders and public officials.

One entity that seeks to connect all those parties is the European American Investment Council. Operating out of Berlin and Atlanta, it is comprised of site selection consultants, accountants and attorneys working to promote European foreign direct investment in the Southeast.

During a recent visit to the Magic City, EAIC president and CEO Matthias Beier spoke with the Birmingham Business Journal about how the organization is looking to drive growth in Alabama.

What are the top factors site selectors look for in a community?

I would say there are three top factors for them. The first one are available sites. So, if they plan to manufacture in the U.S., the question is, do they find the size that fits in terms of size to their project? Is it big enough or is it too big? Is it even? Do they probably need some support to develop the site or are there any buildings they could probably even use? Sometimes there are buildings left from another company which has moved out before. If it fits to their needs, that’s a great asset, of course. The site with also utilities in place, with a road connection, probably close to an interstate, close to the downtown area — that is something that is important for a company. If they are not manufacturing, if they are planning to open an IT company for instance, if they are planning to open an office in Birmingham, of course, it’s important that they find office space they can afford that fits their needs, which is central.

The second one I would say is the workforce. Do they find the workforce they need? As we know, unemployment is at a record low in the U.S., so, if a community almost has no unemployment, this is very good for the community. For an investor, of course, it’s even better if there is some unemployment so that they know they can find the workforce, and that’s not just about people who might look for a job, but also do they find machinists? Do they find people that can work in automation? They do not necessarily need a college degree. If they are welders, if they are carpenters — that’s what companies are often looking for. Since it’s, of course, not that easy to exactly always have the workforce available, it’s always good if the community has ideas and a concept and a strategy how to develop the workforce that is needed so that if a bigger company comes which says, “We need 50 machinists” — probably you don’t have 50 machinists right now, but if the community college is included and involved and there is a way to develop the workforce within the next two years or something, that is something that is very important to most companies. This is often the most important factor when they make that site selection or their decision.

The third one are incentives. Do they get tax abatements per hire? Do they get any other incentives? That is something where often also the state is involved, because incentives are often made on various levels or on a community level, on a state level, sometimes even on a national
level, but then it would be a very big project usually — or if it is in a region that gives special support from the U.S. government in general.

One factor I would also like to add: what is very important everywhere companies are going to, is that there are people who are open to foreign companies who are pro business. If you got someone like Kirk (Atkinson of Adah International) who knows so many people in town and who’s so actively involved in Europe and in projects — that really helps a lot, because he invited me, he introduced me also to Michael Johnson with Baker Donelson, who is doing I think a great job — John Hilliard, (Birmingham city) councilman, I really enjoyed the meeting with him. It’s always important for me to see the political side there is support for economic development, and (Josh) Carpenter, of course, with the city of Birmingham who told me something about the sites that are available close to the Barber Motorsports Park. That was also very helpful for me to meet him. In a community, it’s very often very important that you have someone who is involved like them, who is pro business and is open to investors.

What is Birmingham doing right or how can it improve?

I did not have a project in Birmingham so far, so it’s hard for me say what can be better or what they’re doing right, but what I can say is that I think that Birmingham is a great fit for a lot of companies. It has a pretty good size for companies who want to be close to a metropolitan area, who want to be in an urban area environment, but with assets that probably other cities don’t have anymore, because they have become too big and too expensive. Birmingham — there is still a lot of room to grow, and that’s why I think there are lots of opportunities when you work in economic development in Birmingham. I see a lot of potential. Just the fact that I could meet so many people in Birmingham ... that shows that Birmingham is doing a lot of things right already on a very good way when it comes to locating companies in the area.

Given everything that’s being said about trade deals, tariffs, NAFTA and the EU, how much stock do you put into politics when making decisions and recommendations?

We are a completely unpolitical organization. We don’t have an influence on it, and we don’t have any political agenda. Of course, we are observing political developments, especially discussion on tariffs, and what we’re doing: we are always trying to make use of the political debates and discussions. Always when there is a discussion about tariffs, there is a demand for consulting. We talk to companies, because companies want to know what’s going on in the U.S. and how it might impact their business in the U.S. So, we always observe political developments in the Transatlantic context, and then try to find a strategy on how we could best talk to companies about it, or how we could best make use of it. That’s how we are handling this.

We don’t do any statements — we are pro or against tariffs — that’s not how we see our job. Because also our membership might have different opinions on that. We have communities who have companies who would probably benefit from any kind of tariff. We have communities who would say our companies would suffer from that.

Are there any projects in the works for Birmingham or Alabama?

I would definitely say this is the case, because we have a lot of projects in our pipeline. We also have the feeling that some of the companies after the last elections in the U.S. were a bit hesitant
when it came to new projects and they just wanted to see how the new administration worked and if anything for them changes. And what we see now is a lot of projects are coming who were on hold before. And most manufacturing companies from Europe look at the Southeast when they look at the U.S., because they are often supplying other European companies, which are in the area already. The Southeast is very pro business, it's open to investment, has the potential. It has also the sites available. That's, for instance, something which can be very hard for a company to find in the Northeast, for instance, if they want to go there.

So, yes, we have a lot of projects in the pipeline, and I think many of them would be a really good fit for Birmingham and the area around Birmingham — always, of course, depending on if it is someone who wants to be more in an urban environment or just wants to be close to it. But we definitely have projects that would be a good fit for Birmingham. And I would be glad to bring projects to Birmingham, but I also think it is important for Birmingham to get involved in our organization or similar organizations and Transatlantic organizations, because they have to, they need to get some exposure in Europe to be recognized. Because there is a lot of competition in the Southeast when it comes to economic development. It has become very, very professional in the Southeast more than in most other areas of the U.S. So, it's important somehow to speak out and to get recognized.

I think it's important that also people who live and work in Birmingham understand what economic development means and how the city can benefit from it — what also their representatives like Hilliard are doing to attract companies, because, that in the end, creates jobs. It really has an impact on the community and the people that are living there.

What type of organizations are you looking to partner with?

For us, a typical partner could be the city of Birmingham, like the economic development department, or the economic development alliance of Birmingham. So that would be typical members for the EAIC: regional economic development organizations or cities if they do economic development themselves.

The EAIC will host an event at the Southern Economic Development Council’s annual conference in Mobile on July 30.
How Birmingham is adapting its incentives to attract startups

By: Tyler Patchen

In early 2014, entrepreneur Bill Smith purchased six floors of the John Hand Building.

A year later, he launched an on-demand home delivery service called Shipt, which took 11,000 square feet on the building’s sixth floor.

At the time, those developments weren’t viewed as setting the stage for one of the biggest economic development projects in Birmingham history. But that’s exactly what happened.

Months after Target Corp. acquired Shipt for $550 million, the company in July unveiled its plan to maintain its headquarters at the John Hand Building, while also adding 881 jobs in the Magic City.

In terms of total jobs, Shipt’s project is behind only the Amazon.com fulfillment center as Birmingham’s biggest economic development victory in recent history. But the average salary of nearly $50,000 and the types of positions it encompasses puts the project on an entirely different plane from past economic development projects.

The big question for Birmingham now is: how can the Magic City build on Shipt’s huge startup success, even with companies on a smaller scale.

Many believe some strategic shifts in the way local and state governments approach incentives for young companies could be one answer. Some of those shifts are already underway, thanks in part to Shipt.

A multitude of local entities joined forces to work with Shipt and create a unique incentive package geared toward the fast-growing tech company’s unique needs.

While acknowledging that $550 million acquisitions of startups aren’t a common occurrence, local economic development officials and innovation advocates say the Shipt incentive deal creates a framework and a roadmap that could ultimately boost job growth and elevate Birmingham’s startup scene.

How the Shipt package came together

Historically, mergers and acquisitions haven’t been kind to metro Birmingham, which has lost thousands of jobs over the years in the wake of deals.

So, when Target unveiled plans to acquire Shipt, a team of startup advocates and local officials joined forces and viewed the acquisition as an economic development opportunity for the region.

Among others, the group included Innovate Birmingham Executive Director Bob Crutchfield, the city of Birmingham, Jefferson County Commission and the Alabama Department of Commerce.
“(Shipt) could’ve gone anywhere,” Jefferson County Commissioner Carrington said. “They had a presence in Silicon Valley, and obviously if you (invest) half a billion dollars, you’d like your investment to be close to home, so we recognized early on and said that we need to position the community to keep (Shipt’s) corporate headquarters here.”

Carrington said when it came time to meet, representatives of the city, the county, the state, the business community and Shipt came to the table to talk, and it was unanimous that everyone wanted Shipt in Birmingham.

Helping matters, Crutchfield said, was the fact that Smith himself is a strong proponent of Birmingham who was more than willing to work on a retention strategy to keep the company in the Magic City.

The result was a collaborative process with the company that took a deep dive into its specific needs, rather than attempting a one-size-fits-all approach for incentives.

“From that meeting in early January, we put together a workforce team and tried to understand what their issues were, because, interestingly, it wasn’t the kind of incentive plan you usually see like building a road or land,” Carrington said. “This is more of an intellectual incentive package. We listened to Bill and saw what his needs are and then tried to craft, between the city, county and state, a package to address his needs.”

The deal included incentives from the city, county and state. The city of Birmingham approved $1.762 million in incentives through its new Talent Acceleration, Talent Investment and Talent Optimization programs for the package. Jefferson County’s incentives totaled $720,000.

The state of Alabama’s incentives were a jobs credit for $14.5 million over 10 years, an investment credit valued at $1.5 million over 10 years and AIDT services and support valued at $604,960.

But with Shipt’s status sealed, Crutchfield and others say it’s important to take a look at an intentional strategy to retain, attract and grow startups in the region, specifically those associated with key Birmingham industries. A report by Innovate Birmingham found that, while the Magic City has experienced some successes in recent years, its startup activity remains well behind a number of regional peers when adjusted for population size.

They are hopeful Shipt will provide the roadmap for future deals to help turn that tide, even if the companies involved are on a much smaller scale. Ultimately, advocates like Crutchfield said the end result of more startups is more wealth creation, which in turn generates more opportunities for new startups, local businesses and employees.

The unique needs of startups

While many incentive packages for notable economic development projects focus on property tax abatements or large capital expenditures, those generally aren’t the most attractive options for startups.

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But talent is often a huge need, especially in the tech world where the competition for employees is fierce around the region and nation.

Crutchfield said one of the things Innovate Birmingham has explored is how to be more proactive with incentives to stimulate startup growth and also incentivize job creation.

"Revenue growth and employee growth often come hand in hand, but employee growth is required in front of revenue growth because people drive that value," he said. "If we can help these early-stage companies with incentives that would allow them to have some sort of tax credits or some offsets to make it easier for them to hire, they could grow more rapidly."

The deal gave the city of Birmingham a high-profile chance to showcase its new talent investment, talent acceleration and talent optimization programs.

Josh Carpenter, director of the Office of Innovation and Economic Opportunity for the city of Birmingham, said the city has already received a strong response from insiders and outsiders, because not all metro areas have a nuanced program that can be tailored to a company’s unique needs.

"We learned a lot from (having) a company that was willing to roll up its sleeves alongside of us," Carpenter said. "It’s exciting to see other people are validating the model."

From the city’s standpoint, the new TIP, TAP and TOP programs illustrate a new way to think about incentives at the local level.

It’s a strategy heavily focused on workforce and talent development, both in the company and in the overall community.

"Workforce is the currency of a knowledge-based economy, and we have to design our incentive structure to fit with that," he said.

Carpenter said the programs, which both incentivize and create additional opportunities for hiring local while also developing pathways to recruit talent to Birmingham, can both maximize job growth and further build the base of skills in the area.

For example, the TOP initiative creates a pool of funding to partner with universities and other local entities to train employees, something that reduces a burden on a company.

That’s important for all businesses, but extremely important for young startups.

"When we’re able to work with the company and take some of the burden off them, it allows the company to turn part-time jobs into full-time jobs and potentially hire more people in the workforce, which is exactly what we need," he said.

While Shipt’s incentives totaled $2,000 per job, Carpenter said future deals will depend on a number of factors, including company size, scale, positions being created and average salary. Whether a company fits into key industry clusters in the region is another factor, as is whether it fits in a traded industry.
And one focus will be encouraging and incentivizing hiring of local talent, which Carpenter said will create dividends down the road, even if an employee leaves their initial employer, because it will ultimately boost the amount of local talent.

Given Birmingham’s status as the state and region’s economic center – in addition to it being the location of Innovation Depot and UAB – the city will certainly play a role in an evolving incentives strategy for the metro. But other governments are looking to get involved, as well.

Carrington said the county is exploring a number of ways to support the startup scene, noting that workforce is a critical piece.

“If you can’t find people, business is going to dry up, so we’re looking at a two-pronged approach of investment and workforce,” he said.

At the state level, Secretary of Commerce Greg Canfield said the state is encouraging a regional approach to growing startups.

“The problem with encouraging and incentivizing startups is there is a great deal of risk associated with startups,” he said.

But the state has been able to support startups via its Innovation Fund, which gives the state an opportunity to encourage funding at a minimal level.

“We used that to encourage regional and statewide efforts to encourage startups and provide them early-stage seed funds,” Canfield said.

At this point, the state does not have specific incentives for startups. But some say changing that could provide a significant boost for metros like Birmingham.

Where to go from here

Innovation advocates have suggested the state create specific incentives that would be attractive to highly scalable startups.

That could include incentives that reward job creation over time, giving startups and high-growth companies a reason to grow in Alabama or move to the state.

Birmingham’s ranking among the most affordable large cities in the nation, gives the Magic City a strong selling point when trying to attract growing companies.

But to overcome the talent pipeline deficiency relative to some tech hotspots, experts say incentives – particularly those that focus on building and training a workforce – can help sweeten the deal.

At the state level, those changes would likely require new legislation.

“If there was a proposal, we would examine it closely,” Canfield said. “We feel there is a fiscal responsibility to making incentives available. We have to view them from a perspective of being in an investment and expecting a return.”
From the county’s point of view, Carrington sees opportunities to become a more active player in initiatives like the Velocity Accelerator, which gives critical funding and support to startups while giving them access to venture capitalists and others to secure their future needs.

And talent development, which is a priority in the region across a range of industries, remains critical.

Kathy Nugent, with the UAB Harbert Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, said Birmingham must have a workforce pool that understands both startups and entrepreneurship.

“To be a real startup town, you have to have a pool of serial entrepreneurs,” she said. “It’s people who have done it before and they have had some failures and success. So, I think that is a real key component to have a successful startup community, and we’re starting to build that now.”

Crutchfield said Shipt’s success and decision to stay in Birmingham, among other recent developments, has given Birmingham some critical momentum.

He said it’s critical for the area to build on it. A startup-focused incentive strategy is one piece of that, but not the only piece. Closer ties between local startups and the corporate community are another key factor, among many others.

“Momentum is an interesting thing. It requires energy to sustain it, and if you don’t continue to put the energy behind it to continue the momentum, you’ll coast back to inertia. I think we’ve made great progress but it’s like anything else, that progress does not sustain itself. That progress has to be shepherded and stewarded, and it is going to take action to keep moving it forward.”
Danny Sheridan, the legendary oddsmaker from Mobile, placed one of the first legal sports bets in Mississippi on Wednesday.

Then he chastised the Alabama Legislature for its refusal to allow its residents to vote on legalizing gambling, be it casino gaming, sports betting or a lottery.

Sheridan said Alabamians do more illegal betting on college football, per capita, than any state in the country and spend hundreds of millions of dollars playing lotteries in Florida and Tennessee and visiting Mississippi casinos.

"What you'd have to have (to legalize gambling in Alabama) is a legislature that isn't gutless and will allow us to vote on it," he said at the Beau Rivage Casino in Biloxi. "You can't legislate morality. This Legislature is right there with North Korea and Russia. They just do whatever they want to do.

"So here we are supporting gaming in other areas, generating revenues for them, and now here's sports gaming and once again Alabama has its head in the sand," Sheridan continued. "Our Legislature feels that we're smart enough to elect them, but not smart enough to vote on a lottery, casino gaming or sports betting.

"I'm proud to be from Alabama. It's my home and I would never move. But when I'm traveling across the country, in Europe, and the subject of sports betting comes up, I'm embarrassed to say I'm from Alabama."

With Wednesday's opening of the Beau Rivage sports book, Mississippi becomes the fourth state to offer legalized sports betting. At the same time the first bets were being placed at the Beau Rivage, a similar scene was playing out at the Beau's fellow MGM property, Gold Strike Casino in Tunica.

Two years ago, the Mississippi Legislature passed a bill authorizing sports betting in legal gambling establishments (casinos) in anticipation the U.S. Supreme Court would ultimately overturn a 25-year-old federal law that prohibited sports betting outside Nevada.

That ruling finally came in May and the Mississippi Gaming Commission immediately went to work establishing rules and regulations governing sports betting in Mississippi, setting the stage for Wednesday's opening.

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Sports betting

FROM A1

BETS AGAINST AUBURN

As for Sheridan’s bets, the first one was bad news for Auburn fans.

He placed $1,000 on the Tigers to win no more than nine games this upcoming football season.

Sheridan was one of a handful of dignitaries on hand at the Beau Rivage on Wednesday as legalized sports betting began in Mississippi.

At noon sharp, when a law allowing legal sports gambling in the state took effect, Sheridan and the others — including former NFL players Robert Royal and Willis McGahee — placed the first legal bets.

“I’m very flattered,” said Sheridan, who has provided daily odds for USA Today for the past 30 years. (His odds are also carried on AL.com.) “I don’t bet on sports, but I’m glad people do because I make a living off of it. I was honored to be asked to place the first bet. If I win, the money will go to charity. I think I might win, but I don’t know.”

Sheridan was asked to place the first college football bets. His other wagers included $1,000 on South Carolina to win less than 7 1/2 games; $1,000 on Washington to win more than 10 1/2; and $250 on Clemson to win the national championship.

“I would have bet on Alabama,” he said, “but I didn’t like the odds. Too low.”

Sheridan placed one other bet — $5 on LSU to win the national championship.

“I would have bet a penny, but they made me bet $5,” he said, chuckling. “I have several friends who love LSU and I wanted to punish them by showing them I bet $250 on Clemson and $5 on LSU.”

10,000 WAGERS, FIRST LEGAL ONE

McGahee, the former Miami Hurricanes and NFL star, noted Wednesday marked his first visit to the Mississippi coast.

“This is my first time down here and I’m loving it,” he said. “Not only that, it’s an historic event, betting on sports for the first time. I’m happy to be a part of it.”

McGahee, who was asked to place the first NFL proposition bets, said he placed bets on the Cleveland Browns to go over 5 1/2 wins and the Buffalo Bills to go over six wins.

He was asked if, while at the casino, he might put a wager on his beloved Hurricanes.

“Of course. The ACC is all ours,” he said. “Of course.”

More than 100 people waited for the dignitaries to place their bets before public betting kicked off — among them Jim Gladden of Birmingham, dressed in an Alabama Crimson Tide shirt.

“I’ve made 10,000 bets on football games,” Gladden said. “This will be my first legal one. We come down here a lot. We come down about every two weeks. We heard Danny Sheridan on the radio yesterday saying he would be here to make the first bet. There’s a lot of excitement in being here.”

Cashiers prepare to take the first legal sports bets in Mississippi at the Beau Rivage Casino in Biloxi on Wednesday. Warren Kulo, wskulo@al.com
Why Alabama is far behind Mississippi on sports gambling

By: John Sharp

Alabama and Mississippi share more conservative characteristics than they have differences on religion, politics and Southern culture.

But when it comes to legalized gambling, Mississippi has more in common with New Jersey than its Deep South neighbor.

Mississippi casinos, 26 years since first opening in 1992, are cashing in to the tune of more than $2 billion a year while filling up the state coffers with around $250 million in revenues.

And more money is on its way when Mississippi becomes the first Southern state to allow legalized sports betting starting Wednesday.

Alabama, more than any Bible Belt state, has long recoiled over the notion of legalized gambling of any kind. And there are plenty of doubters on whether Alabama can move forward with sports gambling even after the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a 25-year-old federal ban against it outside of Nevada.

"President Trump will kneel for the National Anthem before Alabamians will get to vote on lottery, casinos and sports betting," said Danny Sheridan, a nationally known sports analyst and oddsmaker who resides in Mobile.

Sheridan will join a number of dignitaries, including former NFL star Willis McGahee, in placing the first bets when Mississippi rolls out legalized sports gambling on Wednesday.

Initial wages will be placed around noon at the Beau Rivage Resort & Casino in Biloxi, a 58-minute drive from downtown Mobile. Gold Strike Casino Resort in Tunica, along the Mississippi River southwest of Memphis, will also begin accepting legal sports wagers at the same time.

Pressure mounts

In Alabama, the potential to authorize legalized sports gambling has run up against reality of a decades-long opposition to gambling of any kind.

Critics contend that legalized gambling isn't worth the headache, brings on addiction and other social ills, isn't sound policy for generating state revenues, and is discouraged by many Christian denominations.

It's been 19 years since voters last had a chance to decide on a lottery. Three casinos are in operation in Alabama, only because they are located on tribal land. None of them are allowed to provide table games like blackjack or roulette.

The state is also one of nine that prohibits daily fantasy sports, a booming online industry that allows competitors to battle by fielding fictional teams of real players chosen from real sports leagues.

Legislative pressure is mounting in recent years to whittle away at the anti-gambling forces that have long dominated the state power structure.

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Part of the frustration, particularly from lawmakers near the state's borders, stems from the lack of a state lottery. Tennessee, Georgia and Florida all have lotteries that, to some extent, provide funding for public education. Convenience stores are strategically placed near the Alabama border in each state to capitalize on residents on residents seeking scratch off tickets or Powerball.

"Alabamians support the lottery in three states, casino gambling and sports betting in Mississippi," said Sheridan, who isn't found of a lottery and calls it a regressive tax, but acknowledges that surrounding states are taking advantage of Alabama.

He added, "The bottom line is the people who are elected, they think that we are smart enough to elect them and they think we're not smart enough to vote on casino gambling or a lottery. The Legislature, those with that mentality, are an embarrassment."

Joe Godfrey, executive director of the Alabama Citizens Action Program, a powerful lobbying group funded by the state's Southern Baptists that has long opposed gambling expansion, sees things differently.

He said the fact that surrounding Southern states have gambling or lottery is not a sound reason to push for something similar in Alabama.

"The pro-gambling forces are always pushing for more and more and they always use the 'other state around you' as an excuse that other states are going doing it so why can't we?" said Godfrey. "The reality is that the whole thing is just a way to make money for the gambling bosses. They are the big winners."

Anti-gambling lawmakers also are skeptical that Alabama benefits from adding slot machines or lottery tickets.

Rep. Rich Wingo, R-Tuscaloosa - a former player and coach at the University of Alabama, who played seven years in the NFL - said sports gambling will "pervert" the state's favorite pastime: College football.

"Now all of a sudden, people will be watching Alabama and Auburn because they have money on the line and then the field goal kicker misses the field goal," said Wingo. "It puts it in a different perspective with money on the line rather than a sport and an enjoyable event versus something you could lose on financially."

**Lottery fate**

For those wanting more gambling options in Alabama, there is little to show since voters rejected a proposal to authorize a state lottery in 1999. It was the last time voters got to weigh in on a gambling-related proposal through referendum, though most political observers believe there would be a different result today.

"I would assume lottery would be approved if it were placed on the ballot," said Andrew Billings, director of the Alabama Program in Sports Communication and Ronald Reagan Chair of Broadcasting at the University of Alabama. "And I would assume sports betting would be approved by a higher percentage of the population."
Giving voters a chance to decide on a lottery has been discussed on the campaign trail this year.

Tuscaloosa Mayor Walt Maddox, the Democratic nominee for governor, is pushing for a lottery that his campaign believes will pump $300 million per year into education.

"As we've watched Alabama citizens fund the educations of children in surrounding states by enthusiastically playing their lotteries over the years, it's brought a hard lesson that waiting to adopt new revenue sources can lead to the loss of billions of dollars over time," said Chip Hill, spokesman with the Maddox campaign.

Maddox's campaign also confirmed with AL.com that the mayor is supportive of Alabama authorizing legalized sports gambling. During the primary season, his Democratic opponent, Sue Bell Cobb, was the only candidate pushing for it.

"We should immediately begin consideration of legalized sports gaming so that there's not another moment in the future when we look back with regret over not moving quickly enough," Hill said.

Republican Gov. Kay Ivey has not commented on whether she supports legalized sports gambling. She has said that she supports a referendum for a lottery, but that a decision would have to be made by the Legislature.

The last time a lottery decision went before state lawmakers was during a special session in 2016, after former Gov. Robert Bentley - a Baptist deacon - pushed for it. The House adopted a constitutional amendment to give voters the chance to weigh in, but it was defeated in the Senate.

**Daily fantasy sports**

Lottery bills did not surface in 2017 or 2018, but lawmakers did bring up another gambling-related bill on a daily fantasy sports that was backed by the industry giants, FanDuel and DraftKings. The two companies pulled out of Alabama in 2016, after former state Attorney General Luther Strange issued cease and desist orders to them.

Strange's efforts led to the daily fantasy sports bill receiving the Alabama House's "Shroud" award for 2016. The distinction is issued annually in the House and recognizes the "deadest" bill of a legislative session.

Mississippi, Tennessee and Georgia lawmakers have all agreed to allow daily fantasy sports within their state boundaries, according to one online analysis that tracks laws in each state.

State Sen. Thomas Whatley, R-Auburn, has been a past sponsor of the daily fantasy sports legislation in Alabama. He anticipates legislation resurfacing again in 2019.

The bill has split lawmakers, especially Republicans who hold a supermajority status in the Legislature.

"The politicians, what they will do is put the finger in the air and see which way the political winds are blowing," said Godfrey, a leading opponent to daily fantasy sports. "They will decide whatever they need to do to get elected. Even the Republicans, who I thought would stand on convictions. Someone needs to stand up on what is right."
Chance vs. skill

For Alabama lawmakers, a legal question surfaced during the daily fantasy sports debate and would likely arise while discussing sports gambling: Are these activities "game of chance" or "game of skill."

If a judge were to rule sports gambling a game of chance, then it's legalization would depend, much like the lottery, on amending the 1901 Alabama Constitution. The only way to do that is with a referendum, approved by state lawmakers.

In Mississippi, the authorization of sports betting occurred with vote from the legislature and does not include a referendum.

"The fly in the ointment in Alabama is that we have a constitutional provision involving lotteries and games of chance that other states do not," said Jess Brown, a retired political science professor at Athens State University. "The legislatures have more freedom in other states."

Legal scholars seem split on whether the Legislature can unilaterally approve sports gambling or if approval requires a constitutional amendment via a referendum.

Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall's Office believes constitutional change would be needed because of the likelihood of court challenges.

"A constitutional amendment would be the only way to conclusively establish the legality of sports gambling in Alabama," said Mike Lewis, spokesman with Attorney General Steve Marshall.

John Carroll, a law professor at Cumberland School of Law and a former magistrate judge for the Middle District of Alabama, said he believes the Legislature can authorize sports betting without running afoul of the constitutional ban on lotteries.

Carroll said that Alabama has already allowed betting on dog races - the state has three dog tracks -- and allows parimutuel betting for in-person or TV simulcasts of dog and horse races.

Parimutuel wagering, ruled legal by the Alabama Supreme Court in 1971, is a system of betting on races where the winner divides the total amount of the bet in proportion to the sums that are gambled individually.

"It seems to me that true sports betting, which is whether Alabama beats Mississippi by 25 points, is far closer to a game of skill than a game of chance," said Carroll. "You have to analyze team players and that sort of thing."

Godfrey, with anti-gambling ALCAP, argues that there is more chance than skill in sports betting. He said, "You take a chance that the referee is not going to make a bad call or your take a chance that a player stays healthy. You can call it skill if you want, but that's bogus. It's chance."

Sheridan, who began providing sports odds for USA Today in 1982, said sports betting is a game of skill.
Said Sheridan: "If you buy a piece of property, you use your skill. You are taking a chance, but you need skill. You want to open a business, that is also skill. Yes, you are taking a chance. I can assure you, that in my whole adult life in this industry, handicapping sports and sports betting is a game of skill. If it was a game of chance, I wouldn't have devoted as many hours to it."

**Looking to 2019**

Another question facing Alabama right now is if the 2019 legislative session, which will be highlighted with new faces elected during the Nov. 6 general election, will represent a golden opportunity to introduce some sort of gambling.

Sen. Bobby Singleton, D-Greensboro, said that politically, the beginning of the four-year terms "is a good time to look at what's out there."

"This is why you would want to do it during the early part of the quadrennial," Singleton said. "People will have gotten over their elections and between now and three years, you can work it out with your constituency. Now is a great time to look at aggressive new means to bring in new revenue into the state."

Brown, the retired political science professor at Athens State, said he believes lawmakers will return to Montgomery in January and find out the state is already flush with more revenue than in years past.

"The economy is generating more, there will be the Internet sales tax," said Brown, who also said that a fuel tax increase could also be looked at. "They will be flushed with revenue. That may take some of the pressure off of doing (gambling) for the money."

He also suspects the Poarch Band of Creek Indians - which owns and operates the three tribal casinos - holds enough political sway to keep a gambling expansion from occurring without some sort of compact.

Wingo and Godfrey, though, will plan to oppose any new measures. And their argument will focus around some of the dire facts about states that do have gambling, including Mississippi, which typically ranks among the lowest in quality of life standards and education.

"Mississippi is where gambling was supposed to solve all of its problems back in 1992," said Wingo. "Go back, and that was supposed to be the fix-all. But it hasn't. The state is still last and I think it's a prime example."
Maddox matches Ivey in July fundraising

Vance tops Parker in chief justice race, campaign finance reports show

By Kim Chandler
The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY — Democratic challenger Walt Maddox kept fundraising pace last month with Gov. Kay Ivey, according to campaign finance reports filed Thursday, a positive sign for his campaign as he takes on the Republican incumbent in the governor’s race.

Fundraising reports filed Thursday evening show that Maddox raised $245,024 in July. Ivey raised $248,523.

Maddox also has slightly more campaign cash on hand, heading into the peak of campaign season. Maddox has a campaign fund balance of $313,248, according to filed reports. Ivey has a campaign balance of $271,476.

While Maddox and Ivey posted similar numbers in July, Ivey has a more than 3-1 overall fundraising advantage when including money raised during the party primaries.

Maddox has raised a total of $1.4 million for his campaign, while Ivey raised nearly $5 million. Ivey reported spending most of that in the GOP primary as she faced multiple challengers from within her own party.

See CAMPAIGN, A7
The cash advantage allowed Ivey to keep a heavy television presence during the GOP primary. Ivey began running a new television ad this week.

The Maddox campaign says it’s encouraged by the fundraising reports.

“This continues to be a great indicator of the popular support that’s out there for Walt Maddox as more and more voters, Republicans and Democrats, respond to Walt’s vision for Alabama,” Maddox spokesman Chip Hill said in the campaign’s statement.

The governor and the Tuscaloosa mayor will face each other in the Nov. 6 election.

Maddox is seeking to become Alabama’s first Democratic governor in 20 years. His platform includes a proposal to start a state lottery to fund education programs.

Ivey is seeking to win the office in her own right. She had been the state’s lieutenant governor, but became governor last year when then-Gov. Robert Bentley resigned amid an effort to impeach him.

Maddox last week challenged Ivey to a series of four debates ahead of the November election.

In another high-profile race on the November ballot, Democratic candidate for chief justice Robert Vance has more available campaign cash than Republican Tom Parker.

Vance and Parker have both raised about $425,000 for their campaigns, but Parker spent most of his money in a hard fought GOP primary with current Chief Justice Lyn Stuart.

Parker, a current member of the court, has $13,753 in his campaign coffers. Vance, who did not face a primary challenge, has $239,199.

Vance bested Parker in July fundraising numbers. Parker raised $2030 in July while Vance raised $86,815.

The race has undertones of a rematch. The race pits Parker, a member of the court since 2005 and a longtime ally of former chief justice Roy Moore, against Vance who ran against Moore in the 2012 chief justice race.
Sen. Shelby earns praise from colleagues

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer heaped praise on U.S. Sen. Richard Shelby, R-Ala., for clearing spending bills that fund the government at the fastest rate in 30 years and for the longtime Alabama senator casting his 10,000th vote earlier this year.

Shelby was named chairman of the prestigious Senate Appropriations Committee in April following the retirement of Sen. Thad Cochran, R-Miss. In that post, Shelby said he wanted to bring the Senate back to regular order, meaning the committee would clear individual bills relating to government agencies instead of the recent process — spurred by disagreements over spending — of short-term spending bills and omnibus bills.

Under Shelby, the appropriations committee has just done that, and the bills were marked up by the panel at the fastest rate since 1988, McConnell said in a floor speech Wednesday.

Shelby has been in the Senate since 1987.

— Howard Koplowitz
Continental Motors starts plant expansion

Lawrence Specker lspecker@al.com

Sixteen months after Continental Motors announced a $70 million project to transform its manufacturing operation in Mobile, the company says it's starting construction.

The lengthy delay appears to have been driven, at least in part, by property negotiations between Continental and the Mobile Airport Authority. The MAA oversees land use at the Mobile Aeroplex at Brookley, where Continental has been a major tenant for decades, employing about 400.

Late in March 2017, Continental announced that the "Blue Marlin Project" would involve building a new state-of-the-art manufacturing plant at Brookley, consolidating operations scattered among nearly a dozen buildings.

Continental Motors makes engines for light aircraft in Mobile.

Continental, whose parent company is China-based AVIC International Holding Corp., makes a piston and turbine engines for light aircraft, among other products and services.

As of December, the city and Mobile County had approved a combined $435,000 in incentives to be paid directly as reimbursements for "capital expenses incurred by the company in developing, modernizing, expanding and equipping" the new site at Brookley.

According to company information, "The new facility will be nearly 275,000 square feet, with the majority being dedicated to advanced engine and parts manufacturing for all Continental Motors Group product lines. It will be populated with brand-new manufacturing equipment and include a special area designated for evaluation of new manufacturing techniques and processes, including additive manufacturing and automation."

Continental also plans to house new customer support and technology development operations in the facility.
Brookwood future hangs in balance

Hospital participation in Medicare, Medicaid programs in jeopardy as officials await word on federal survey

Anna Beahm and Amy Yurkanin  AL.com

Brookwood Baptist Medical Center faced an uncertain future Thursday night as hospital officials awaited word on the results of a federal survey that would determine its participation in Medicare and Medicaid programs.

The hospital, facing a string of patient deaths, was told last month by federal officials that payments from Medicare and Medicaid could end Aug. 9, so all eyes were on the clock as the day drew to a close.

Hospital communications manager Laura Clark on Thursday said the hospital expected the survey to be concluded at some point Thursday night and that Brookwood would release a statement regardless of the outcome. She did not say what time that would be, but said it would be later in the evening. There was no update at press time. (Please visit AL.com for the latest.)

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services told the hospital in July that the Medicare program would not make payments for patients admitted after Aug. 9, according to an earlier statement from the hospital. It was the second time the hospital had received that warning in a little more than two months.

SEE BROOKWOOD BAPTIST, AS

See Next Page
Brookwood Baptist

The loss of Medicare funding can be devastating to health care facilities, said Eunice Halverson of the Center for Patient Safety in Missouri. "Other insurance companies follow the lead of the government," Halverson said Thursday. "Medicaid follows what the federal government does, and the private insurers also follow along."

The hospital on Wednesday said it expected payments to continue, as it was still subject to the federal survey. Federal officials countered, telling AL.com they had not yet officially extended the deadline and were still "reviewing all options," although it was a possibility Brookwood could still lose Medicare funding beginning Friday.

"Surveyors from the Alabama Department of Public Health and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services conducted their follow-up of our hospital's action plan, and tomorrow we will provide additional information to demonstrate its effectiveness," Clark said in an email to AL.com on Wednesday. "The hospital will continue to participate in the Medicare and Medicaid programs without interruption until the survey process concludes.

"We take patient safety very seriously, and we are committed to continuous quality improvement and to maintaining the confidence of our community."

CMS spokesperson April Washington said in a statement Wednesday to AL.com, "This remains an ongoing immediate jeopardy. The hospital may continue to take the necessary steps to correct deficiencies prior to termination.

"CMS and the Alabama State Survey Agency continue to work together to ensure the safety of all patients in this facility," Washington wrote in the email. "We have the option to extend the immediate jeopardy and survey process up to 90 days. We are reviewing all options prior to the Aug. 9 termination date."

HOW WE GOT HERE

The first warning came after a patient died in the psychiatric department in April. The patient suffered a heart attack after being restrained. CMS officials said hospital staff didn't follow proper procedures for physically restraining a patient.

Hospital officials submitted a plan of correction and were approved to continue providing services to Medicare and Medicaid patients in May.

However, a survey completed in mid-July discovered more problems at Brookwood, bringing another warning from CMS.

Inspectors said two patient deaths, one severe injury and trauma from falls could have been prevented by following hospital procedures. Inspectors also found hospital staff failed to properly track patients' vital signs, putting them in danger of death or injury.

One investigator discovered no staff members, including nurses, entered a patient's room for 10 hours in May.

In January, a bipolar patient in a psychiatric program escaped the facility and jumped from a parking garage. The patient disappeared after she checked in for treatment, but before the first group therapy session. Records show her husband called several times to check on her and warn staff she might try to leave, according to an inspection report. According to the report, staff failed to notice the patient had escaped and never tried to track her down.

In May, a 35-year-old patient nearly died after an extreme drop in blood pressure went untreated by hospital staff. Reports show the nurse did not notify the doctor of the patient's decreasing pressure until the patient was unresponsive.

The patient was placed on a ventilator and treated in intensive care for more than a week.

On June 10, a patient died after receiving a dose of pain medication for possible indigestion. The monitor indicated the patient's pulse had stopped 15 minutes before a family member notified staff. The monitor technician failed to notice a decline in the patient's heart rate before the heart stopped.

At least one other patient with diagnoses of psychosis and depression left the hospital in July and was found in nearby woods.

Brookwood is a 645-bed, full-service hospital located just to the east of Highway 31 and south of Lakeshore Drive. It's owned by Dallas-based Tenet Healthcare, a for-profit hospital chain.
Why the Open Meetings Law is important to you

By Brian Edwards
Montgomery Advertiser

MONTGOMERY — "It was pretty egregious," said Brandon Cox, publisher and editor at the paper as well as the author of the column that sparked the controversy.

Prior to his column, Cox said there were rumblings of access issues in the town of about 200 people because officials had closed a school with little notice by adding a last-minute agenda alteration. After that, he received word about rules barring admission to city meetings and what seemed like an overall refusal to grant public records requests.

A call to the city's clerk and Paint Rock Mayor Jamie Fisk seemed like it wouldn't lead to much on a Friday nearing deadline as Cox prepared to head out of town for the weekend. Then the phone rang.

"She said if you don't live here, you don't have any business here," he said. "She stood by it and she was pretty aggressive about it."

Almost 300 people crowded into the City Hall auditorium, shouting down supporters of an unpopular insurance change. The mayor was booed from the podium at one point.

- At least five, possibly six, council members headed to a back room behind a locked door to iron out a compromise resolution.
- Under Alabama law, a quorum is half of a body's members. The City Council has nine members, though one seat is currently vacant.
- Experts and advocates said the council's meeting raised eyebrows, especially since they came from behind closed doors and passed a resolution with little discussion.
- City officials said there was never five members in the room at one time, but state law also forbids the cycling of members in and out of the room to avoid a quorum.
- Advocates said the meeting likely violated the spirit of the law.

There isn't any central database for recording open meeting act violations because they are brought as civil suits, but a cursory search shows several instances of alleged violations over the last few years.

- Since the 2015 amendments to the Act, there have been at least 10 reported allegations of violations of the law, according to various news reports, with groups ranging from the Alabama Ethics Commission, the Gadsden City Board of Education and the Gulf Shores Schools Board of Education.
- Last August, a 2016 increase in Alabama teachers' health insurance premiums was reversed after a judge sided with the Alabama Education Association over open meetings violations, according to the Lagniappe Weekly.

- Often times, those issues are not prosecuted though, especially when the issues over which an open meeting was closed prove to be non-controversial.
- An Alabama citizen, the attorney general, the media company or the circuit's district attorney can bring forward action in civil court. No member of the governmental body can bring suit against the others in that same group.
- For each violation of the meeting, each official can be fined $1,000 or half of their governmental monthly salary, whichever is less. The minimum penalty is $1.
- Monetary violations can also be levied in cases of improperly called executive sessions.
- The court can also invalidate the actions taken in the meeting that violates the act, provided that the complaint is filed within 21 days of the action being made public, similar to the judges reversal in the AEA insurance case.
- Multiple violations raised from the same instance are combined into one case.
- The governmental body can pay for the expenses of the present or former members that violate the law.

With advocates concerned about the violations, some are calling for increased penalties and enforcement of the law.

Alabama Sen. Cam Ward, R-Alabaster, who led the charge in his chamber to strengthen the law in 2015, said he wants to revisit the act in the upcoming session.

"I think we could look at increasing the penalties," he said. "You have to make it more of a deterrent or they aren't going abide by it."

When asked about several cases where bodies may have possibly violated the law accidentally, like a legal official hinted at in Montgomery, Ward was emphatic.

"Ignorance of the law is no excuse. On that point, I don't have a lot of sympathy."

Advocates that talked with the Advertiser previously agreed with that assessment of open meetings laws, saying violations are violations, no matter the intent.

"Even if it was inadvertent, it doesn't take away the fact that there was an attempt to engage in a public decision process without accountability," said Noel Isama, a senior policy analyst at the Sunlight Foundation, a nonpartisan, nonprofit open government advocacy group.

Cox said that in Texas, where he recently worked, there are stringent rules for open meetings and public records training to make sure that officials are well-versed in the laws.

"You actually had to take a course and pass a test. Here I don't think there is any of that. These people want to do well, they just have no guidance," he said. That ignorance extends itself to public records disclosure, another central piece to the issues in Paint Rock that feel to the wayside amid the explosion of scrutiny related to their closed meetings.

Ward said he wants to tighten up those laws as well, which have become increasingly clouded with technological advances. Officials can avoid disclosing their emails, for example, by using a personal account, he said.

That intentional skirting of the law is a perfect parallel to the changes he made in 2015 that stopped officials from holding "serial meetings" that skirted the quorum rule on purpose without breaking the law.

It comes down to accountability in both meetings and records, Ward said, which helps expose misguided or wrong-doing by public officials.

"I think," Ward said, "they go hand-in-hand because they are about transparency in your governments activities."
Sabans’ charity gives $500,000 to children’s groups

By: Ben Jones

The list of career accomplishments for University of Alabama coach Nick Saban has grown longer and longer since he first arrived in Tuscaloosa in 2007. The list of work done by the Nick’s Kids Foundation is growing, too.

The official charity of Nick and Terry Saban helped break ground in July on a new classroom facility at the Tuscaloosa Juvenile Detention Center. It dedicated a 17th Habitat for Humanity House in Tuscaloosa earlier this summer to commemorate Alabama’s 17th national championship. The organization has also helped with numerous other projects in recent years around Tuscaloosa.

“Very seldom (in coaching) that you can say ‘This is our 12th annual anything,’” Terry Saban said. “But this is our 12th annual Nick’s Kids luncheon.”

The luncheon at Bryant-Denny Stadium on Thursday distributed more than $500,000 to organizations benefiting children.

It’s become an annual rite of summer for the luncheon to mark the start of fall football practice at Alabama. Players reported for camp on Thursday before the first practice on Friday. About a dozen current players sat and signed autographs for children attending the luncheon.

“I think this is a great lesson for players, to learn how to give back to the community, to set a good example,” Nick Saban said. “I think they all feel really good when they do something like this. Everybody has a lot of pressure on them to do a lot of things, whether it’s academically or whether it’s creating an image as a person, whether it’s football-related... So to be able to do something like this, I think the players really enjoy it. ... It’s an opportunity to be around players when you’re not in a meeting or coaching or on the field. I think that really helps understand them.”

The charity is named for Nick Saban Sr., the late father of the Alabama coach who built a reputation for helping children in his community in West Virginia. Children and volunteers at the event also had the chance to take a photograph with Saban at the luncheon.

“Growing up... I think we all want our parents to be proud of what we do,” Saban said. “I know my dad probably would have a little pride in what we’ve been able to accomplish professionally in coaching, but I think he would be most proud of what we do here. This is something that was really, really important to him.”

The event is one of the annual highlights for the charity. The luncheon honors local volunteers and community members. It’s also an annual reminder of what Nick’s Kids has accomplished in the last year.
“This has grown into something beyond even what we thought, to be able to accomplish the projects that we’ve been able to accomplish in the community,” Saban said. “Whether it’s Brewer Porch (Children’s Center), building the juvenile detention center classroom, the 17 for 17 houses that we’ve partnered with Habitat for Humanity. To be able to give away what’s grown into a half-million dollars a year at this event, I never really imagined that it would happen this way. I really do think that Miss Terry has been the driving force behind this in terms of figuring out great projects and things that people love to support.”
UA student in charge of Crimson Career Closet graduating with Ph.D. in counseling

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

Like the many University of Alabama students who have come through her office door, Adora Hicks is preparing for a new job when she graduates on Saturday.

Hicks will graduate Saturday with a Ph.D. in counseling education supervision. Next week, the Howard University alumna will begin a new job as career leadership development coordinator for student-athletes at UA.

Hicks will be among 1,450 students receiving degrees during a graduation ceremony at Coleman Coliseum on campus.

Hicks, a career counselor in UA's Career Center is in charge of the Crimson Career Closet, a resource on campus providing students help with professional attire for job interviews, networking events and public speaking.

Students may borrow up to four clothing items free of charge for seven days, and can keep the clothing longer if needed for follow-up interviews or engagements, Hicks said.

"I have a strongly held belief: How you dress is how you feel," Hicks said.

Helping students prepare for interviews and the workplace is part of the appeal of her job as a career counselor.

"We create an environment where they feel comfortable," she said.

HICKS

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Hicks said the Career Center inherited the closet from the Student Government Association. In 2017, it opened in career center with more space and more professional clothing that was collected through donations. Hicks received a $4,000 grant from UA Student Life in 2017 to help launch the center.

The center in 2017 became a fusion of the clothing resources and career counseling for students.

The center helps students select the proper attire for interviews and other engagement and assists students with career counseling advice such as practice questions.

"Having an impact on their career-related journey is my why," she said.
25 student-athletes to graduate this weekend

Staff report

Twenty-five student-athletes are slated to receive degrees during Alabama’s summer commencement this weekend.

Among those graduating are five who have earned master’s degrees: Peyton Grantham (softball), J.C. Hassenauger (football), Leona Lafaele (softball), Carlo Rezzonico (swimming and diving) and Connor Short (baseball).

Three softball players who earned All-America status at UA are graduating: Lafele, Alexis Osorio and Demi Turner. Softball’s Sydney Booker will also go through commencement on Saturday along with women’s basketball player Quanetria Bolton, rower Lauren Feher, volleyball player Quincey Gary, diver Christina Lu and soccer player Alexis Mouton.

In addition to Hassenauger, Elisha Shaw, Thomas Pell and Deionte Thompson from football will receive diplomas. From the men’s swimming and diving team, Will Freeman and Robert Ramoska will join Rezzonico in graduating. Two members of the men’s golf team — Jonathan Hardee and Steven Setterstrom — are also slated to receive diplomas.

Five members of the track and field/cross country program are graduating: Mark Edwards and Quincy Smith from the men’s squad and Sarah Mohan, Rachael Reddy and Alison Ringle from the women’s team.
Alabama fans snag coveted autographs

By: Mark Hughes Cobb

It may not rise to a numbers level with April’s A-Day scrimmage, when 70,000 or more might file into 101,821-seat Bryant-Denny Stadium, but Saturday’s annual Fan Day open practice drew several thousand faithful to watch the 2018 Crimson Tide work out in helmets and shorts.

For anyone foolish enough to think this was some kind of laid-back demonstration run-through, head coach Nick Saban could be seen stomping and shouting, tearing into the red team after a blown pass play. The Saban Show is clearly one big reason many show for Fan Day: The line to get a single autograph, no posed photos, with the coach ran 90 yards or more most of the 45-minute autograph session, after practice.

It was after Saban’s hiring in 2007 that A-Day crowds began exploding, with a record of more 92,310 in 2011. Fan Day numbers run decidedly lower: Just two Bryant-Denny entrances were used, on the west side, and the assembled, scattered throughout the shady-side bleachers, didn’t crowd a lot of rows. No official numbers were available, as there was no ticketing or gate count.

Still, sprawling lines for player and coach autographs remained heavy for the 45 minutes allotted, with fans bouncing from line to line after getting footballs, posters, helmets and other paraphernalia signed. Tiny ones in cheerleader and player outfits spread out on the turf, or tried a few kicks at the south goalpost.

Some came just to watch the practice, though.

“Yeah, we’re kinda nuts,” said Taylor Davis, who showed up with wife, Anita. The Davis family is ripe with avid fans: His brother Lindy Davis runs Lindy’s Sports publications out of Birmingham, covering pro, college and fantasy football, major league baseball, NBA and more. Their son Charles you might have seen celebrating in high style with thousands of paying customers outside Mercedes-Benz Stadium for the UA-Georgia National Championship game. Charles’ start-up Tailgatehouse concept turns shipping containers into pop-up tailgate parties, with cash bars, food, monster-screen TVs, live music and more.

Saturday marked Donalee Lasseter’s 11th Fan Day.

“I’ve been coming every year, religiously, since 2008,” she said. “John Parker Wilson was quarterback, but the line for him was like 20 minutes long, so I got this no-name quarterback, Greg McElroy,” she said. Her no-name exploded in 2009: McElroy moved up to starting quarterback and led the Tide to SEC and national championships over a 14-0 season, then graduated to a pro career with the New York Jets. After retiring from the NFL, McElroy joined the SEC Network as a college football analyts. So that helped her develop her Fan Day style.

See next page
“You never know which autographs you get, what’s gonna happen.”

Lasseter typically goes straight to the shorter lines, for lesser-known players, stars of tomorrow. In 11 years, she’s not yet gotten Saban’s John Hancock, nor has she tried, over her collection of posters. She did land Lane Kiffin once.

“I’ve only got 45 minutes; I’m not going to spend the whole time in one line,” she said. “Every once in a while I’ll be rude and butt in, but ... usually I get a lot of coaches, and get them to tell me a kid, tell me a number I ought get.”

Saturday she was hoping to land a few of the bigger names, though, shooting for senior running back Damien Harris, a team leader with 2,037 yards and 13 touchdowns over the past two years, with 203 yards and two scores receiving and wide receiver DeVonta Smith, who snagged Tua Tagovailoa’s 41-yard strike for the national championship-winning touchdown in overtime.

Practice wasn’t a full scrimmage, though the field stayed full, with paired red/white offensive and defensive units working toward each end zone. Quarterbacks Tagovailoa and Jalen Hurts switched out frequently with newer competition such as No. 10 Mac Jones. Linemen not currently in action ran drills on the sidelines, while others iced down. Though the afternoon sky clouded over, with a few sprinkles, temperatures on field ran into the mid-90s, so industrial fans were rolled out halfway through.

Early-bird fans, some queued up since early morning, were handed color-coded wristbands. Those 150 began lining up for gate 25 at 4 p.m., half an hour before practice ended, then bolted down toward Saban’s north-end-zone table as security let them through, about 4:35, as players stripped off helmets and sweaty jerseys, filing into place behind tables running down each sideline.
Media focus is on Alabama, Nick Saban this month

By: Ken Roberts

The Nick Saban media blitz kicks into high gear this week.

ESPN The Magazine features the University of Alabama football coach on the cover of its 2018 college preview issue, which goes on sale Friday, and ESPN2 and Fox Sports are set to air documentaries that focus on Saban.

– In “More Than a Scowl,” ESPN The Magazine shares 14 vignettes that demonstrate Saban’s humor, his softer side and his obsession with success. The magazine also examines “The Saban Effect,” how his coaching blueprint has left an imprint on the entire sport.

– At 6 p.m. Thursday, ESPN2 will debut the first episode of “Training Days: Rolling with the Tide.” The weekly four-part series will provide a behind-the-scenes look at Alabama football.

“Alabama football is one of the premier programs in all of sports,” said Lee Fitting, ESPN’s vice president of production. “The intrigue behind their championship-filled decade and the fans’ appetite for unique access continues to escalate. This series will provide a unique perspective of the Crimson Tide as they build upon a foundation for what they hope is another championship campaign.”

The series will include all-access footage of Saban at practice and in coaches’ meetings, interviews with players about their lives on and off the field, a tour of the program’s state-of-the-art facilities and a look at the Crimson Tide’s die-hard fans.

The hour-long episodes will continue on ESPN2 at 6 p.m. on Aug. 15 and Aug. 22, with the final episode set for 9 p.m. Aug. 29. All episodes will be extensively re-aired on ESPN’s other networks throughout the month.

Fox Sports “Power of Sports,” which focuses on how sports is driving social change, will feature a one-on-one interview with Saban discussing his various philanthropic initiatives, including working with his wife, Terry, as part of Nick’s Kids Foundation.

Since the Sabans arrived in Tuscaloosa in 2007, the foundation has given about $8 million to more than 300 charities and organizations that benefit children.

At an Aug. 2 luncheon where more than $500,000 was distributed to local charities, Saban said he was inspired to lead the foundation based on his father’s principles and values.

“As you all know, this is all about my dad and the legacy of what he tried to do. Hopefully he’ll be proud of what we’re doing here today,” Saban said. The episode will debut at 4:30 p.m. Aug. 13 on Fox Sports Southeast and air at various times throughout the month.
UA opens research site in Mobile

Office will focus on transportation issues

Staff report

The University of Alabama will lease space at the GulfQuest facility in Mobile for research and program initiatives in the region, primarily in the area of transportation.

"The University of Alabama has a long history in Mobile and along the Gulf Coast, including the Dauphin Island Sea Lab. With a large and growing number of research projects and collaborations in the area, the GulfQuest facility will give us a centrally located physical space to expand our research capacity," said John Higginbotham, UA interim vice president for research and economic development in a statement released by the university.

The lease begins Sept. 1 at the facility on South Water Street in downtown Mobile. GulfQuest is a 120,000-square-foot maritime museum designed to look as if it were a ship headed into Mobile Bay and the Gulf of Mexico.

At the facility, UA's Alabama Transportation Institute plans to house a research and policy resource that brings together research and development industry professionals. The facility will provide those professionals with a site to seek innovative solutions to the challenges of building and maintaining a transportation system that provides safety and mobility for Alabama's citizens, while providing efficient freight movement, stimulating economic growth and conserving energy resources.

The city of Mobile's multimodal transportation system includes aviation, roads and interstate highways, rail, ports, harbors and inland waterways that support significant engineering, maintenance, manufacturing and technical training activities for transportation as well as activities in the financial, tourism and service sectors, said Shashi Nambisan, executive director of the Alabama Transportation Institute.

The Alabama Transportation Institute's plans drew praise from lawmakers and regional officials.

"We are pleased and proud to welcome the University of Alabama to downtown Mobile," said Mobile Mayor Sandy Stimpson. "This partnership with the Alabama Transportation Institute is significant because of the incredible growth we are experiencing as a region, placing unprecedented demand on our infrastructure. In addition, UA's location at GulfQuest should help energize our waterfront and continue momentum downtown."
Alabama finishes renovations for several projects

By: Ed Enoch

Workers in Lakeside Dining Hall on Tuesday were installing new drink fountains, polishing stainless steel prep stations and completing other final touches in anticipation of the renovated eatery re-opening next week as students return to campus for the fall semester.

The renovated dining hall, which can seat about 750, will have a soft opening on Aug. 16, said Kristina Patridge, director of university dining service.

Work to renovate Lakeside began in the spring. The dining hall can now provide a lot of options for customized meals as well as accommodations for diners with food allergies, Patridge said. She noted there is a gluten-free kitchen in the dining hall. The dining hall also offers traditional fare such as pizza, burgers and salads.

Overall, students will get a better value with the food options, she said.

The upstairs mezzanine offers a taco bar with homemade tortillas and dining space. The mezzanine also has a stage for nightly programing that could include a DJ, student bands and trivia, Patridge said.

“It’s fun,” she said.

The dining hall is among the projects that will be completed by the time classes start Aug. 22. The new freshman residence hall next door and H.M. Comer Hall are also set open this fall.

The $53.2 million new residence hall has a bed capacity of 493 and will be the first to feature keyless entry to dorm rooms for students, said Tom Love, UA’s assistant vice president of construction administration.

The latest phase of the improvements on University Boulevard on the eastern edge of campus is also scheduled to be completed before the start of classes. The work stretches from roughly 12th Avenue East to Hellen Keller Boulevard and is scheduled to be completed by the beginning of the fall semester.

Ongoing work on campus includes the renovation of University Hall on the historic Bryce Hospital campus, the stabilization of the former Bryce Hospital main building, the new Kappa Alpha Theta sorority house, expansion of the Alpha Gamma Delta sorority house, and the new Capstone parking deck across Second Avenue from Moody Music Building.
Experts examine trends in city

Plan for future must account for student population growth

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

It's been said that Tuscaloosa is a drinking town with a football problem. Turns out, it's a college town with a growth problem.

Figuring out an updated comprehensive plan to manage that growth—all while determining the look and direction of Tuscaloosa's future—is the task of Columbus, Ohio-based consultants "planning NEXT," which the City Council hired for $731,000 in April to guide the process of updating Tuscaloosa's comprehensive plan.

The consultants have formed a steering committee of 30 local volunteers, made up of residents and business owners along with University of Alabama and Stillman College representatives, among others.

Residents can follow along at the plan's website—framework.tuscaloosa.com—where more information will be added as the process continues. Those interested also can sign up here to be on the group's mailing list.

On Wednesday at the Tuscaloosa River Market, Jaime A. Greene, principal of planning NEXT, and the firm's senior planner Michael A. Curtis presented some city statistics and growth trends to the steering committee.

While the public is slated to get its first glimpse at the plan on Nov. 27 during a planned community workshop, Greene said the comprehensive plan's foundation will be built on those statistics and growth trends.

"Trends don't have to be your destiny," Greene said, "but they must be understood."

See TRENDS, B3

See next page
In addition to giving the comprehensive plan a new name — Frame/Work — Greene and Curtis showed statistics that indicate Tuscaloosa is a city made up mainly by youth.

While Tuscaloosa’s population estimate of 96,352 put it first of Alabama’s top five cities in growth margin, at 24 percent, the bulk of this increase was likely due to growth at the University of Alabama.

Curtis showed statistics indicating UA had an academic enrollment of 38,563 — more than 14,000 above its traditional enrollment average — for 2017 while Tuscaloosa’s largest median age group were those in the 18-24 range, at about 25 percent.

Across Alabama, the largest age group — also at about 25 percent — is the 45-64 group.

While Tuscaloosa’s growth in those aged 25-34 is possibly tied to the city’s improved ability in keeping the young professionals that are educated here, college students also are believed to have affected the city’s average household size trend.

This average increased from 2.22 people in 2010 to 2.26 in 2016, Curtis said, while the size of the average family household spiked from 2.93 to 3.26.

“I have a speculation that this goes back, again, to student population,” Curtis said. “This is a statistic where I think we need more research.”

The city’s poverty rate also is among the highest in the state, at 23.9 percent.

Only Birmingham, at 29.4 percent, is higher than Tuscaloosa among Alabama’s largest five cities. Huntsville, Montgomery and Mobile all fall under Tuscaloosa.

Steering committee member Robert Reynolds, who also serves on the city’s Planning and Zoning Commission, questioned whether the poverty figure also could be affected by college students, who often have spending power but fall into the federal poverty margins because they currently lack jobs.

Greene said it was possible, but cited similar findings in Athens, Georgia, and said the students likely weren’t enough to artificially inflate the city’s poverty rate to a great extent.

Regardless, data showed that Tuscaloosa’s student population should be considered a significant factor in planning for the city’s future housing, land use, transportation and infrastructure needs, the planners said.

“This process is about developing a framework for how we want to grow and play in the future,” said Greene in explaining the “Frame/Work” moniker given to this process.

“You’re going to frame it,” he said, “and then it’s going to be a lot of work to make it happen.”

Reach Jason Morton at jason.morton@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0200.
Alt-right views in US spring from common source

UA political scientist's survey shows correlation with white nationalist attitudes and economic woes

By Jeanna Smialek
Bloomberg News (TNS)

NEW YORK — America's white nationalist movement is complex, but there's a common thread running through the alt-right: economic disadvantage.

A year after the infamous "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Va., University of Alabama political scientist George Hawley has zeroed in on the demographics of white nationalist identification in a new analysis. He dug into survey responses from more than 3,000 non-Hispanic whites taken during the 2016 American National Election Survey.

About 12 percent of respondents expressed strong feelings of white identity, white solidarity and perceived discrimination against their race, he found — and economics played a heavy role. People without a college degree, the unemployed, and those with lower incomes were all much more likely to answer positively along all three dimensions.

"It turns out that economic variables are some of the
ALT-RIGHT

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stronger determinants of white attitudes on racial questions," Hawley said.
The alt-right movement has proved hard to study, because its members are usually anonymous and much of its activity takes place on online discussion boards. Hawley noted that the label itself seems to have taken a hit post-Charlottesville, but "the constituency for explicit white identity politics remains, which is why it is helpful to understand the economic and demographic factors that are correlated with that ideology."

His research focuses on people who said race was very important to their identity, who thought it was important that "whites work together to change laws that are unfair to whites," and who said whites face at least moderate discrimination in the U.S.

Neither religion nor marriage and family were closely associated with such responses, but divorcees were more likely to support them. Divorce might make people feel alienated, driving them to extreme views, or the causation could run the other way. Having such attitudes makes people more likely to get divorced, Hawley speculated.

While Democrats rarely expressed racially extreme views, independents and Republicans did so in similar numbers. Gender also failed to explain alt-right identification: a slightly higher percentage of women expressed the attitudes.

"Although the ranks of radical right movements tend to be overwhelmingly male, men are not more likely than women to possess these kinds of feelings about race," he wrote.

While there's a clear income and economic divide, there's no obvious age gap.

"This suggests that the problem of white identity politics is not something that will be resolved by generational replacement," Hawley said. "However, this also challenges the alt-right's claim that the youngest whites are becoming increasingly receptive to their ideas."

The survey might miss some racist views, because respondents might be reluctant to express racism, knowing that it's socially frowned upon. He also points out that a strong white identity doesn't necessarily equate to right-wing radical group involvement: the demographics of the movement itself might differ from the demographics of those who share its core beliefs.
What Tide fans need to know for 2018 football season

By Ken Roberts
City Editor

Crews have been sprucing up the Walk of Champions outside Bryant-Denny Stadium, where statues of football coaches who have won national championships are displayed.

And, yes, "2017" has been added to area around Nick Saban's statue.

The preparations mean one thing: Football season is getting closer, with the University of Alabama set to kick off the 2018 season against the University of Louisville at Camping World Stadium at 7 p.m. Sept. 1. UA's home opener will follow on Sept. 8 against Arkansas State, with kickoff set for 2:30 p.m.

Here's a quick guide of things fans need to know:
- **Opening in Orlando:** Tickets to the Camping World Kickoff game are going for around $50 on the online resale market. If you're looking for things to do before or after the game, www.campingworldkickoff.com has a link to parks and attractions near the stadium, including Walt Disney World, Universal and SeaWorld, Legoland and more. The website has a promo code fans can use to get discounts at those venues. Also of note, the stadium will host a Jay-Z & Beyonce concert Aug. 29, the Wednesday before the Alabama game. If you're staying at home, the game will be shown on ESPN.
- **Arrive early:** Probably the top thing to keep in mind once the home schedule begins Sept. 8 is to get to Tuscaloosa early. With a myriad of road construction projects and new security measures at the stadium, smart fans will want to be at the stadium in plenty of time before kickoff. Walk-through metal detectors will be at all gates at Bryant-Denny Stadium this season. Fans will be asked to remove all metal objects, including keys and cell phones, before going through the metal detectors. Fans who attempt to bring in prohibited items will have to dispose of them or return those items to their car before entering the stadium. The clear bag policy will also remain in place, with fans limited to see-through bags that cannot exceed 12 inches by 6 inches by 12 inches, along with 1-gallon clear plastic freezer bags. Small, one-compartment clutch purses that do not exceed 4½ inches by 6½ inches, with or without a handle or strap, also will be permitted. All bags will be subject to inspection.
- **When is kickoff?** So far, kickoff times have been set for UA's first three games: 7 p.m. for the Sept. 1 game against Louisville in Orlando, 2:30 p.m. for the Arkansas State game Sept. 8 in Tuscaloosa and 6 p.m. for the Sept. 15 Ole Miss game in Oxford, Mississippi. Kickoff times for the rest of the schedule will be determined after the TV networks decide which games they will broadcast. Announcements will generally be made a week or 10 days before each game.
- **Need tickets?** UA's website, www.rolltide.com, has tickets for sale to all home games, except the Nov. 24 Auburn game. Some Texas A&M game tickets are available as part of a partial ticket packages requiring the purchase of tickets to other games. Online ticket reologists are advised to check online for prices starting at around $30, while conference games begin at around $100. The only exception is the ticket for the Auburn game, which starts at around $300; lower bowl seats near the 50-yard line are priced at around $1,000.
- **Home sweet home:** UA will have three home games in September, one in October and three in November. The homecoming game is Oct. 13 against Missouri. If you're looking to schedule a non-football social gathering this fall, or heaven forbid, or a wedding... do it on Oct. 27. That's Alabama's bye week and no game is scheduled for that Saturday.
- **Put on your traveling shoes:** UA has games scheduled in Orlando; Oxford, Mississippi; Fayetteville, Arkansas; Knoxville, Tennessee, and Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Atlanta could be added to the list, if UA wins the SEC West. That game will be played at 3 p.m. Dec. 1 at Mercedes-Benz Stadium. If UA qualifies for the College Football Playoff, Arlington, Texas, or Miami Florida could be added to the list. The semifinals are set for Dec. 29. And if UA advances, call your travel agent and get ready to add some frequent flyer miles: the national championship game is set for Jan. 7 at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, California.
Get your ‘Yeah Yeahs’ out

Annual 5K raises money to fight cystic fibrosis

By Jessa Reid Bolling
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

Scott Cochran has one of the most recognizable voices in Tuscaloosa.

The University of Alabama football team's strength coach is in his 12th season and his booming chant of “Yeah, Yeah, Yeah, Yeah” is played over the loudspeakers during every game at Bryant-Denny Stadium.

For the fifth year, Cochran

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5K

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is lending his signature battle cry to a 5K that benefits efforts to find a cure for cystic fibrosis. The event, which will be held Saturday, was inspired by a friendship. Cochran’s son has a best friend, 9-year-old Thomas Plott, who has cystic fibrosis.

“The response that we’ve gotten has been amazing and we hope it keeps getting bigger every year,” said Blair Plott, Thomas’ mother, when describing the impact the Yeah Yeah Yeah Yeah 5K has had in Tuscaloosa.

Thomas Plott was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis when he was 10 weeks old.

Yeah Yeah Yeah Yeah 5K

What: Annual race to raise money for Cystic Fibrosis research
When: 10 a.m. Saturday
Where: The race will start and end in Government Plaza, 2106 Sixth St. in downtown Tuscaloosa
Cost: Registration is $30 for the 5K, $25 for the fun run and $45 for the Yeah Virtual 5K race. To register for the race, go to www.ploottfoundation.org/yeah-yeah-yeah-5k.
More info: Packet pickup will be from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday at Expeditions, 1657 McFarland Blvd N.

The genetic disorder causes mucus to build up in the lungs, pancreas and other organs, leading to breathing difficulties.

According to the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, more than 30,000 people in the United States are living with cystic fibrosis, with more than 70,000 people living with the disease worldwide. The severity and symptoms can differ from person to person cases and there is no known cure, though treatments are able to help people with cystic fibrosis live longer lives. Among those treatments is a fitness plan, which played a part in the idea of starting the Yeah Yeah Yeah Yeah 5K race as a fundraiser.

Blair Plott and her husband, Bobby, founded the Thomas Plott Foundation. The Plott family’s efforts have raised more than $500,000 for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, a donor-supported nonprofit organization, founded in 1955 by parents of children with cystic fibrosis, with a large portion of the contributions going directly toward medical research.

Blair said that Scott and his wife, Cissy, have been an enormous help in organizing and promoting the event ever since they first came to the family five years ago and said they wanted to help.

Those who wish to contribute, but may not be able to run, are in luck. The event includes various options available to those who wish to still support the fight against cystic fibrosis and push toward a cure.

“People don’t have to necessarily run to participate,” Blair Plott said. “You can walk the route or you can sign up as a virtual runner. There are options for everyone’s skill level. Everyone can contribute and every little bit counts.”

The annual Yeah Yeah Yeah Yeah 5K race will begin at 10 a.m. Saturday. The race will start and end in Government Plaza, 2106 Sixth St. in downtown Tuscaloosa. The cost to register for the 5K is $30, $25 to register for the fun run and $45 to register for the Yeah Virtual 5K race.
Packet pickup will be from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday at Expeditions, 1657 McFarland Blvd N. To register for the race, go to www.ploottfoundation.org/yeah-yeah-yeah-5k.
UA study show pre-K's effectiveness

Teacher Alicia Jense' works with students in a pre-K class at Rock Quarry Elementary School on Dec. 7, 2017. Tuscaloosa City Schools has around 450 students in pre-K across the system's 10 elementary schools, with a goal to expand the program to every incoming student. (STAFF PHOTO/GARY COSBY JR.)

Researchers say program prepares students for kindergarten

By Drew Taylor
Staff Writer

More than 80 percent of pre-kindergarten pupils in Tuscaloosa City Schools' finish the program ready for kindergarten, according to University of Alabama researchers.

The researchers say the study demonstrates the effectiveness of pre-kindergarten and will help them identify ways to raise the percentage even higher.

"It was so impressive," said Maria Hernandez-Reif of UA's College of Human Environmental Sciences, who along with April Kendrick monitored 373 pupils during the 2017-18 school year. "It really demonstrates that pre-K in the city schools is effective for helping the majority of children get ready."

According to the Alabama Department of Education, a growing body of evidence about the benefits for pre-K students includes:
- They are less likely to repeat a grade, require

Pre-kindergarten in Alabama

Here's a look at the state's spending and the number of pre-kindergarten classrooms:

2013-14: $28,462,050; 315
2014-15: $38,462,050; 410
2015-16: $48,462,050; 652
2016-17: $54,462,050; 816
2017-18: $77,462,050; 938

Source: Alabama Legislative Fiscal Office and Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education

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remedial education, or be placed in special education
• They score higher on achievement tests
• They are more likely to graduate from high school and go on to college
• They achieve higher-paying salaries as adults
• They are more likely to stay out of prison and off welfare.

Statewide, around 29 percent of eligible 4-year-olds were in pre-K programs. According to the Alabama School Readiness Alliance, about 34 percent of 3- to 5-year-old children were enrolled in the city and county’s pre-K classes.

TCS Superintendent Mike Daria said he wants to expand the city’s pre-K program. Right now, TCS has around 450 students in pre-K across the system’s 10 elementary schools.

Daria said he was pleased with the findings from UA’s research.

“The research that comes from this reinforces that this is a positive return on investment,” Daria said.

Hernandez-Reif and Kendrick studied where students started from and where they stood by the end of the school year.

They used different criteria to establish whether students were progressing in the program. Benchmarks used included an eagerness to learn, social skills, language skills, growing literacy and the foundations of reading and writing.

“There’s a whole skill set of abilities that we try to help children understand and grasp so when they are in that classroom, they have that foundation to be able to follow through,” she said.

Many in the academic field have cited the importance of pre-kindergarten as a way to get students reading at grade level by the time they reach the third grade. In a study published in 2012 by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, students who were not able to read at grade level by third grade would not only be less likely to catch up with their more-literate peers, but were four times less likely to graduate from high school.

Hernandez-Reif said that the success rate for literacy was not established by full literacy, a common sign was having students be able to recognize at least ten letters from the alphabet and matching at least three letters with the sounds they make.

“By the end of the year, the majority had improved significantly,” she said.

For math, criteria used to judge comprehension was students being able to count small groups of objects, as well as being able to count in sequence.

For social behavior, Hernandez-Reif said being able to see how children interacted with others and learning how to work together in classroom settings were pivotal points in revealing if they could properly adjust to kindergarten.

“If they’re able to get along in a group with their peers and be able to communicate their needs, then they can regulate their emotions and be able to learn,” she said.

For the 20 percent of students deemed not ready for kindergarten based on their skillset, Hernandez-Reif pointed to some common problems many of these students were facing at home.

“Children whose families were rarely involved or sometimes involved did not make those great gains,” she said. “That’s very important because it speaks to programs to help families and be involved with working with the children. Families need to be involved.”

Hernandez-Reif said she would like to see programs developed to explore what barriers students with little parental involvement were facing and how that divide could be closed.

TCS has had pre-K programs since 1993, but has made a push to increase its numbers over the last decade. Daria said as part of the school system’s strategic plan, the ultimate goal is to have every incoming student in a pre-K program.

“Our goal is to continue to build on that,” Daria said.

Results from research on the Tuscaloosa County School System’s pre-K program are still being processed and will be announced at a later date.

The research was done through funding by the Malone Family Foundation, Project LAUNCH and the UA College of Human Environmental Sciences.

Reach Drew Taylor at drew.taylor@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0204.
Show highlights Nick Saban’s charitable works

University of Alabama football coach Nick Saban will be featured in the August episode of "Power of Sports" on the Fox Sports Southeast cable channel.

The show, which will debut at 4:30 p.m. Monday and have several screenings in August, aims to shine a light on some of the people, organizations and communities all over the United States that are leveraging sports to drive social change.

This month’s episode, College Football USA, features a one-on-one interview with Saban. In the interview, Saban talks about his various philanthropic initiatives, including working with his wife, Terry, as part of Nick’s Kids Foundation.

Saban, who was inspired to lead the foundation based on his father’s principles and values, says, “There’s not much that we do that can make us feel better than when we help someone else.”

The organization supports local youth by promoting their education through juvenile delinquent centers, first-generation scholarships, community centers in church communities and more.

On Aug. 2, Nick’s Kids Foundation distributed more than $500,000 to more than 120 nonprofit organizations that support children, teacher, family and student causes.

TeamMates is a school-based mentoring program that aims to provide support to kids by pairing mentors and mentees as they connect over the course of the academic year. Through a variety of activities spanning board games, crafts, sports or even just one-on-one conversations, mentors provide guidance to students as they navigate their way through their academic careers.

Notable college football teams are also recognized for their efforts to continually give back to the community. Student athletes from Texas A&M and the University of Oklahoma started their summer by serving kids in Haiti through Mission of Hope, Haiti. Inspired by former offensive lineman Andrew Carter and his struggle with acoustic neuroma, the University of Illinois also gathers to aid people with rare diseases. Auburn University’s athletic department partnered with Auburn’s BraveHeart Center for Place and Purpose to rally behind their inclusive health and wellness program that supports of young adults facing moderate to severe disabilities.

The episode’s “Social Spotlight” includes contributions from Iowa State and the University of Tennessee.

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Traffic around Alabama campus will be affected as students move in

By: Staff report

The majority of University of Alabama students living in residence halls on campus will begin moving in at the end of this week.

Some groups participating in early move-in arrived last weekend. This week, move-ins will begin at 8 a.m. Friday. The move-in schedules for each dorm are available at www.housing.sa.ua.edu/incoming-residents/move-in/move-in-schedule.

The weekend move-in period will affect traffic on campus from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday and Saturday and from 1-5 p.m. Sunday. Traffic will be unable to travel southbound on Old Hackberry Lane from Jack Warner Parkway. All lanes of traffic will be used on Old Hackberry Lane between Hackberry Lane and Abercrombie Lane for Presidential 1 and 2 and Riverside move-in. The university recommends using Hackberry Lane to travel to campus from Jack Warner Parkway.

Tuscaloosa City Hall has extended service hours and placed temporary garbage bins to assist with students moving in.

The city’s customer service phone hours for water service will be available until 6 p.m. Monday through Friday. Customers can reach the water department during these hours by phone at 205-248-5500 or anytime via email at ubcontact@tuscaloosa.com.

These extended hours will continue until demand subsides, city officials said.

Customers also can open a new account, transfer existing service or cancel water service online at any time at tuscaloosa.com/onslineservices, and existing customers can pay bills and track account history online at tuscaloosa.com/pay-water-bill.

To help with the household waste and garbage that accumulates during this time, the city’s Environmental Services department has placed nine additional garbage bins around the city in areas with high college student populations.

These specialized bins were set out on July 22 and will remain in place through Aug. 5. They can be found at:

– Fifth Avenue at 16th Street
– Meador Drive at Cloverdale
– Eighth Avenue at 11th Street
– 11th Avenue at 12th Street

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– 12th Street (behind Tutwiler)
– Seventh Avenue at 13th Street
– Ninth Avenue between 12th and 13th streets
– 12th Street at 14th Avenue
– Thomas Street

City officials said users should look for the bins marked with the “Move In/Move Out” signs and noted that these additional bins are strictly for residential use and are not intended for contractors or businesses.

All debris should be placed inside the bins and on the ground nearby.

And to limit the amount of garbage created during this time, recyclable materials like cardboard boxes, plastic bottles (bearing the Nos. 1 or 2 symbols), plastic bags, aluminum cans, steel soup cans, newspapers, magazines, and office paper can be placed in the blue curbside recycling bins or taken to drop-off recycling trailers located around the city.

Some of the recycling drop-off locations also can accommodate glass, which cannot be placed in the curbside bins for safety purposes.

Recycling drop-off locations that accept glass are located at:
– Environmental Services Department — 3440 Kauloosa Ave.
– Leroy McAbee Sr. Activity Center — 3801 Loop Road
– University Church of Christ — 1200 Julia Tutwiler Drive
– Bobby Miller Activity Center — 352 Bobby Miller Parkway
– Tuscaloosa County High School — 12500 Wildcat Drive, Northport
– Munny Sokol Park’s Watermelon Road entrance — 5901 Watermelon Road
– University of Alabama’s Recycling Drop Off center — 1115 14th St.
– The Mildred Westervelt Warner Transportation Museum — 1901 Jack Warner Parkway
Road work forces temporary closures

Lurleen Wallace project affects University Boulevard, Sixth Street

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

Construction on Lurleen Wallace Boulevard South has forced temporary road closures on parts of University Boulevard and Sixth Street.

The closures, expected to last at least two more weeks, only pertain to southbound motorists, as those headed toward Northport can still access these streets to reach businesses.

Southbound motorists can access businesses on these streets, too. They'll just have to make left turns onto cross streets and then Lurleen Wallace Boulevard North before turning left again to reach the desired destination.

"Local access is still permitted," said John D. McWilliams, spokesman for the Alabama Department of Transportation's West Central region. "There won't be a point in time where you can't reach a business."

University Boulevard is expected to reopen to all traffic by the end of the month, McWilliams said.

Then, with the college football season getting underway on Sept. 1 — the University of Alabama's first home game is Sept. 8 — comes an end to University Boulevard's closures until November, McWilliams said.

"They won't do any more work on University Boulevard between (the) Lurleen Wallace (boulevards) until after football season," he said.

In fact, contractors will do no work on Lurleen Wallace Boulevard on from Thursday evening through Sunday evening during the Crimson

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Online

For video of the road closures, visit www.tuscaloosanews.com.
CLOSURES

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Tide's seven home foot-
ball game weekends.
And according to the
parameters of the work
contract, crews must keep
a minimum of two lanes
open in each direction
during daylight hours,
but may reduce traffic to
one lane from 8 p.m. until
5 a.m.
Lurleen Wallace Bou-
levard caters to about
72,000 motorists a
day, so the work has
understandably slowed
traffic flowing into Tus-
caloosa across the Hugh
Thomas Bridge.
To better manage this,
ALDOT installed a tem-
porary stop sign at the end of
the Hugh Thomas Bridge
entrance ramp from Fifth
Street in Northport on
Aug. 4.
First announced in 2017,
construction on the $23.7
million project began July
28.
Jointly funded by
ALDOT and Tuscaloosa
City Hall, about $5.2 mil-
lion in city funds will go
toward decorative street-
lights and traffic signals
and water and sewer line
relocations and upgrades.
ALDOT is contributing the
remaining $18.5 million.
The construction con-
tract, awarded last month
to Tuscaloosa-based S.T.
Bunn Construction Co.
Inc., is expected to run
through late December
2019.
When complete, the
project will add left and
right turning lanes — for
a total of five lanes to
both the northbound and
southbound corridors —
and move parallel parking
spots to side streets to
increase the effective
capacity of the roadway.
New stadium is critical to UAB’s rise

by Joseph Goodman  jgoodman@al.com

Lots of TVs. Everywhere, and at all times. Even during games. Especially during games.

Like, an obscene amount of TVs for an audience obsessively addicted to college football on television. Watch parties before games. Watch parties after games. Watch parties all day during Saturdays in the fall.

Birmingham leaders are in the process of designing the city’s new downtown football stadium around its Uptown entertainment district, and they know the first thing they have to get right is the television experience.

Birmingham is Football City USA when it comes to local TV ratings, and according to UAB football coach Bill Clark, designing a stadium to celebrate and foster that unique distinction is part of the initial plan.

And it has to be.

Football City USA deserves nothing less. Clark and UAB held their preseason media day Wednesday, and the Blazers’ coach radiated with excitement about the city’s new stadium.

Clark and UAB director of athletics Mark Ingram recently presented their ideas for the stadium to the BJCC Authority, and UAB’s football coach called the planning session “two hours of anything you can think of.”

A few years ago, he was a coach without a team. Now he’s a coach helping design a downtown stadium.

What a remarkable ride, and with 20 returning starters this season the team expects big things after last year’s record-breaking, eight-win return to football. How the stadium affects UAB’s future growth is anyone’s guess, but this at least puts the program in a position to succeed and sell more season tickets.

Stuck at Legion Field, UAB would have had no chance for long-term sustainability. UAB signed a 20-year lease for the new stadium in the offseason, and the Southside Dragons will be the venue’s main tenant. Construction is scheduled to begin before the end of the year, and the stadium should be completed before the 2021 season.

“We talked about everything, and they were open to anything, so I could not have been more pleased with how they treated us,” Clark said.

Among other things, Clark and Ingram emphasized technology, concessions, and of course a fun environment for students. Legion Field lacks all of those things.

The geography of the stadium’s footprint against downtown’s hilly northside could give architects the ability to create a unique stadium experience, Clark said. The designs haven’t been finalized, but city leaders have talked about incorporating a viewing area from Uptown that looks into the stadium.

“Iconic,” Clark said.

And hopefully filled with TVs and videoboards big and small to feed Birmingham’s appetite for college football. The sport is Birmingham’s great passion, and watching college football, all day, is what people in Birmingham do on Saturdays in the fall.

We all know the numbers by now. Birmingham is the No. 1 television market in the country for college football, and it’s not even close. It has been that way now going on 17 straight years. In 2017, the difference in ESPN’s ratings between Birmingham (6.8) and the No. 2 market, Columbus, Ohio (5.0), was almost as large as the difference between Columbus and the No. 10 markets on the list — Dayton, Ohio, and New Orleans (3.1).

The city hopes a smart design can create a complete game-day experience for fans of all teams. That thinking is aligned with Clark’s plan for building UAB’s fan base. UAB has a solid core of dedicated fans — it led CUSA in attendance last year — but Clark and city leaders want the new stadium to cater to Alabama and Auburn fans who consider UAB their second team.

That’s the majority of football fans in the city.

There are plenty of UAB grads, employees, students and football fans in Birmingham, but many of them are fans of other teams, too. If given a choice between staying home and watching Alabama and Auburn, or going to Legion Field and watching UAB, well, that’s not much of a choice at all.

Getting those fans to the Uptown district on UAB game days is Clark’s goal. It shouldn’t be too tough.

“It’s not an us-or-them mentality we’re trying to build here,” Clark said. “It’s them, and us, too.”

Watch Alabama and Auburn on the video board while you watch UAB on the field. Why not?

UAB isn’t interested in pulling fans of Alabama and Auburn away from their beloved teams. That’s a losing battle, and counterproductive. Being everyone’s second team in the No. 1 city for college football is a good place to be.

Joseph Goodman is a columnist for Alabama Media Group. He’s on Twitter @joeGoodmanJr.
BJCC bond sale closes, generates $313 million

Erin Edgemon  eedgemon@al.com

The Bond sale to finance the construction of the downtown Birmingham stadium and expansion of the BJCC closed Tuesday.
The “highly successful” bond sale generated $313 million in proceeds for the building of the $175 million stadium and $128 million renovation of Legacy Arena, said Tad Snider, BJCC president and chief executive officer.

He said the proceeds will be invested during the design and construction phases of the project. During the course of the project, the proceeds will generate “significant additional funds” for the expansion, he said.

“The completion of the sale, while in some ways a formality, is an important step forward for the project,” Snider said. “With the funding now in place, the BJCC Authority can now begin to enter into contracts and procure services to advance each project.”

NEW STADIUM

Site work, including utility relocation, already is underway for the downtown stadium.
The stadium will be built on four blocks adjacent to the existing BJCC complex. The site is bordered by Richard Arrington Jr. Boulevard to the south, 12th Avenue North to the north, 22nd Street to the west and 24th Street to the east.
The stadium is expected to be completed in 2021, and the arena upgrades are expected to be finished in 2022.
The BJCC expansion project is being funded by the BJCC, city of Birmingham, Jefferson County, UAB and corporate partners and a 3 percent tax on car rentals in Jefferson County.
The bonds, which were sold July 17, included five series of bonds. They sold with a blended interest rate of 3.91 percent.

This interest rate is the yield for investors who bought the bonds, as well as the interest rate to be paid on the bonds by the BJCC and other partners on the project.

Populous, a Kansas City, Missouri, design and architecture firm, is the lead architectural firm on the stadium and Legacy Arena renovations.

Conceptual plans include a 55,000-seat stadium with additional exhibition space.

Regarding the downtown stadium, Snider said the BJCC is in the early design phase. Selection of the full design team, and other pre-construction decisions will be made later this year and early 2019.

ARENA RENOVATION

The Legacy Arena improvements include adding new luxury suites, a club lounge, upgraded concession stands, expansion of the concourse and exterior updates. The loading docks also will be improved, and the locker and dressing rooms modernized.

Snider said a team of architects and engineers has been hired to work on the design of the arena upgrades and renovation. He said 30 percent of the design team is made up of local minority- and women-owned firms. The names of those firms weren’t immediately available.

Discussions on bidding out the construction work on Legacy Arena won’t start until 2019, Snider said.

“These are large-scale and complex projects,” he said. “We are pleased with the progress made to date and look forward to the progress ahead. We continue to be grateful for the public and private partners who have helped get us to this point, including the city of Birmingham, Jefferson County, the Jefferson County legislative delegation, UAB and the business community.”

“Thanks to this overwhelming support, the bond sale was well-received by rating agencies and the investor community, and we are now in a position to move the BJCC and our entire community forward,” he said.
Global Warming is Not People’s Most Pressing Concern

By: Tom Harris

In a recent interview with the Vatican News service, former U.S. Vice President Al Gore again claimed “the climate crisis is now the biggest existential challenge humanity has ever faced.”

Gore boasted, “I have been fortunate to be able to pour every ounce of energy I have into efforts to contribute to the solution to his crisis.” Ironically, Mr. Gore personally uses vast amounts of energy, often traveling in private jets, SUVs and limousines, and lives in mansions, one of which uses 21 times more electricity than the average American home.

We often hear claims that man-made climate change is our greatest threat. But according to a recent Gallup poll, very few people in the United States actually believe it is. Indeed, even the United Nations own polling reveals that respondents across the world rate climate change last among issues they would like the UN and governments to focus on. No matter how long the list, climate change is always last.

In telephone interviews conducted July 1-11, 2018 with a random sample of 1,033 adults, over the age of 18 and living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia, Gallup News Service asked: “What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today?” The question was “open ended,” in that any answer was accepted.

According to the respondents, the top problems facing America were “Immigration/Illegal aliens” (22%) and “Dissatisfaction with government/Poor leadership” (19%). Only 2% of respondents cited “Environment/Pollution.”

This 2% figure included those who mentioned climate change, as well as those who listed other environmental concerns such as ocean pollution, endangered species and toxic wastes. The fraction of Americans who labeled climate change as the nation’s most serious problem must have been very small indeed.

This sort of result is also reflected in July 5 poll reported by the New York Times. Among the main reasons young adults gave for not wanting (or not being sure they wanted) children, worries about climate change ranked #13 out of 19 reasons given. The first three reasons cited were “Want leisure time,” “Haven’t found partner,” and “Can’t afford child care.”

While other polls show varying levels of public concern about climate change, when people are asked to prioritize issues, climate change often does not rate highly. Even in 2014, just before then-President Barack Obama addressed the heavily publicized UN Climate Summit 2014 in New York City, Pew Research polling indicated that Americans did not consider climate change to be among the top six threats facing the country.

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The UN’s own survey confirms that this trend is even more prominent internationally. After polling 9.7 million people from 194 countries, the UN’s My World global survey finds that “action taken on climate change” rates last out of the 16 suggested priorities for the agency. This despite the fact that on the survey website, the UN lists climate change action as the first choice given respondents. Access to reliable energy, better healthcare, government honesty, a good education, etc., are apparently far greater concerns to people across the world.

This should not be a surprise. In contrast to vitally important issues people must deal with on a daily basis, concerns about man-made climate change are based merely on a theoretical hypothesis, not what is happening now or even in the recent past. After all, even NASA’s Goddard Institute for Space Studies asserts that the Global Annual Mean Surface Air Temperature Change from 1880 to 2017 is only just over one degree Celsius despite a reputed 40% rise in atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO2) content. And the impact of further CO2 rise diminishes as the concentration increases.

It is not known whether the rate of sea level rise has increased or not. However, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s U.S. state-wide extreme weather records database, probably the best of its kind in the world, there has been no increase in extreme weather. So, the primary rationale for “action taken on climate change” through expensive restrictions to CO2 emissions is merely the possibility of dangerous climate change in the future. And this is based on computer models of future climate states, models that have failed to forecast what has actually happened.

Dr. John Christy is Distinguished Professor of Atmospheric Science, Alabama State Climatologist and Director of the Earth System Science Center at The University of Alabama in Huntsville. During his February 2, 2016 testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Science, Space & Technology, he presented a graph that dramatically demonstrates how far apart computer model temperature forecasts differ from what has actually been measured by satellites and weather balloons.

In fact, as of 2016, there was already a 0.5 degree Celsius (0.9 degree Fahrenheit) difference between real-world temperatures and the “runaway” temperature predicted by averaging 102 climate model estimates. And yet those faulty models have become the basis for countless claims of imminent climate doom — and the foundation for policies that would replace abundant, reliable, affordable fossil fuel energy with sporadic, unpredictable, weather-dependant, expensive wind, solar and biofuel energy.

Christy told Congress, “[T]hese models failed at the simple test of telling us ‘what’ has already happened, and thus would not be in a position to give us a confident answer to ‘what’ may happen in the future and ‘why.’ As such, they would be of highly questionable value in determining policy that should depend on a very confident understanding of how the climate system works.”

To create the models requires vast amounts of weather and climate data. We also need to input accurate data as the starting conditions for model-generated forecasts to be performed.
However, the collection and interpretation of the necessary data has only just begun, says former University of Winnipeg professor and historical climatologist Dr. Tim Ball. But there are relatively few weather stations that have temperatures records of adequate length or reliability on which to base model forecasts of future climate, Ball explains.

Referring to former-President Barack Obama’s worries about dangerous future climate change, Ball concludes, “Obama’s worries therefore have absolutely no credibility in the real world.”

Ball is not alone in holding this view. Extensive analyses and reports by the Nongovernmental International Panel on Climate Change (NIPCC) summarize thousands of studies from peer-reviewed scientific journals that debunk or cast serious doubt on the hypothesis that emissions of CO2 from human activities will cause catastrophic climate change.

Yet there is nothing hypothetical about the issues that Americans, and people all over the world, list as their top priorities. Problems with immigration and government are happening right now in America.

The issues rated highest in developing countries like Nigeria (2,735,062 Nigerians voted in the UN poll) are similarly pressing: access to a good education, better healthcare, better job opportunities, better transportation and roads, political freedom, affordable and nutritious food.

All are immediate concerns – today, to real people who understand that the world has real problems to solve: problems that affect our lives and well-being right now.

They realize we don’t have the time, money or manpower to obsess over problems that exist only in computer models, questionable news stories, or the fertile imaginations of multi-millionaires like Al Gore.
University of Alabama in Huntsville Named a 2018 Center of Excellence in Nursing Education

By: Christina Morgan

The University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) College of Nursing was recently named a 2018 Center of Excellence in Nursing Education by the National League for Nursing (NLN). This distinction is in recognition of the university’s efforts to promote pedagogical expertise in its nursing faculty.

The UAH College of Nursing will be formally recognized on September 14, during the 2018 NLN Education Summit, an annual event for nurse faculty, deans, administrators, and professionals from a variety of health organizations.

The NLN’s Center of Excellence in Nursing Education program was started in 2004 and invites nursing schools to apply annually based on their ability to demonstrate sustained excellence in faculty development, nursing education research, and student learning and professional development.

To learn more about the University of Alabama in Huntsville and its recent distinction as a 2018 Center of Excellence in Nursing Education, visit here.
UAH/MSFC/SAO partnership creates instrument to fly into sun’s corona on spacecraft

By: Jordan Dressman

The University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH), Marshall Space Flight Center (MSFC) and the Harvard Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory (SAO) have created and tested the only instrument that will sample the solar wind while exposed directly to it aboard NASA’s Parker Solar Probe (PSP), which will travel closer to the sun than spacecraft from Earth have ever been.

The Solar Wind Electrons Alphas and Protons (SWEAP) instrument – a Faraday Cup that UAH, MSFC and SAO partnered to design, produce and test – will collect charged particles that comprise the solar wind as the spacecraft travels through coronal gases super-heated to temperatures greater than 1 million degrees K (1.8 million degrees F).

The SWEAP Faraday cup will act something like a solar catcher’s mitt, utilizing its window screen-like surface to scoop up samples of the atmosphere of the sun and to measure the detailed properties of electrons, protons and helium ions – the main components of the corona and solar wind.

“The most important question to be answered is how the sun heats the solar corona, the region above the surface of the sun, and then drives the huge, highly supersonic solar wind and creates the bubble within which the solar system resides,” says Dr. Gary Zank, director of UAH’s Center for Space Plasma and Aeronomic Research and chair of the university’s Department of Space Science. “The surface of the sun is relatively cool – 6,000 - 7,000 degrees K – but the atmosphere above is heated to more than a million degrees over a relatively short distance,” he says. “We do not know how or what the physical process is. We have some ideas, and by measuring the distribution function, we will be able to finally quantitatively identify the physical processes that lead to the existence of the solar wind.”

“This is the only PSP instrument that will sample the solar wind from this uninhibited location,” continues Dr. Zank. “The SWEAP Faraday Cup will be the first such instrument to fly so close to the sun simply because no spacecraft has ever gone so close to the sun, diving into the deep solar atmosphere as it will, and no other is planned.”

The 1,350-pound craft will have an 8-foot diameter, 4.5-inch thick carbon-carbon/carbon foam heat shield to protect it, with all instruments behind that shield except the one for SWEAP and the antenna for the Fields Experiment.

UAH worked closely with its partners in designing, testing and fabricating many elements of the Faraday Cup, work that was led at the university by Ken Wright, who worked with MSFC partners, a group that at the time included Jonathan Certain.

MSFC had technical expertise and excellent plasma testing facilities and much of the work that UAH did was done directly at the NASA labs on Redstone, he says.

“It’s been over five or six years invested in the preparation of the PSP, from the original conception to the pulling together of a team, the proposal writing and submission, and of course the building of the SWEAP instrument,” says Dr. Zank.
“To be honest, it's a relief now that the schedule for launch is set, that everything is finally bolted down, the spacecraft fueled and the final preparations for launch being made. There were a number of hiccups and complications along the way, but that is now in the past. Now, we wait to see if the instruments will function properly as planned and designed once PSP is launched and activated.”

The spacecraft is scheduled to launch no earlier than Aug. 11, at 3:48 a.m., with a launch window of 45 minutes.
Alabama science, tech are all over NASA's new Parker Solar Probe

By: Lee Roop

NASA's Parker Solar Probe launched from Florida before dawn today aboard a rocket built in Decatur, Ala., and carrying a key scientific instrument built in Huntsville.

Delayed once on Saturday, the mission's operations manager reported that the spacecraft's size, a small car was healthy and operating normally.

"This mission truly marks humanity's first visit to a star that will have implications not just here on Earth, but how we better understand our universe," said Thomas Zurbuchen, associate administrator of NASA's Science Mission Directorate. "We've accomplished something that decades ago, lived solely in the realm of science fiction."

The probe is bound first for Venus, where it will get a gravity assist - a move NASA describes as like a handbrake turn - to trim orbit tighter around the sun. Ultimately it will fly as close as 15 million miles from Earth's star, closer than any human object has gone. Its mission will last seven years.

On board as one of the probe's instruments is the Solar Wind Electrons Alphas and Protons (SWEAP) instrument designed and built by a partnership of the University of Alabama in Huntsville, NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville and the Harvard Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory.

The instrument will collect charged particles of the solar wind as the probe flies through the gases of the Sun's corona.

"This is the only (probe) instrument that will sample the solar wind from this uninhibited location," UAH professor Dr. Gary Zank told a UAH publication. "The SWEAP Faraday Cup will be the first such instrument to fly so close to the sun simply because no spacecraft has ever gone so close to the sun, diving into the deep solar atmosphere as it will, and no other is planned."

The solar wind

Zank explained the solar wind's importance in an interview last week. Different from the radiation that heats our planet, he said the solar wind consists of "a stream of particles that interact with the Earth via the Earth's magnetic field."

As it nears Earth, the solar wind hits the planet's magnetic field and "squashes the side facing the sun," Zank said. "Behind, the Earth's magnetic field is dragged out a very long way to form a tail." Sometimes, because of orientation of the sun's magnetic field, violent releases of energy can occur called "space storms."

"The solar wind also carries or acts as a medium for massive, explosive releases of mass from the sun, called coronal mass ejections or CMEs for short," Zank said.

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These mass ejections trigger major disruptions of energy that can destroy satellite computer chips, disrupt communications and GPS systems, and affect "anything that is routed through satellites," Zank said. Their problem-causing potential is enormous. "Imagine the FAA and air traffic control not being able to accurately locate and follow landing and taking off by planes at the Atlanta airport," he said.

It was the observation of comets that gave one of the first clues the solar wind existed. Comets' tails do not stream out behind them opposite their direction of motion, as might be expected, but always point away from the Sun, regardless of the direction the comet is heading. The force that points the tail is the solar wind.

Watching Sunday's launch was Dr. Eugene Parker, the 98-year-old physicist who first theorized the existence of the solar wind in 1958. NASA said this is its first mission named after a living researcher.

**The project team**

Zank is the chair of UAH's Department of Space Science, and it was his idea for the university to team with the Marshall center's labs to propose an instrument for the probe. Zank teamed with Jonathan Certain, then a Marshall researcher; Ken Wright of UAH; and UAH graduate student Phyllis Whittlesey, now a researcher at Berkeley's Space Science lab.

They built a Faraday Cup - a metal container designed to catch and measure charged particles - and it will be mounted outside the probe's protective shielding.

One of the probe's other goals is studying the sun's corona - the part visible above the surface during an eclipse - to improve our understanding of why something above the sun is much hotter than its actual surface.
UWA names new athletics director

By Tommy Deas
Executive Sports Editor

LIVINGSTON - Bobby Wallace has returned to the University of West Alabama, this time as athletics director. He was introduced Friday at a news conference at the school.

Wallace served as UWA head football coach from 2006-10, setting the foundation for rebuilding the Tigers’ program. UWA has won three Gulf South Conference championships in the sport since 2012, including last season.

Wallace coached football for 40 years, including 28 seasons as a head coach at the NCAA Division I and II levels. He coached three consecutive national championship teams at North Alabama (1993, ’94 and ’95) and coached 11 teams to Division II playoff berths. His 152 victories are the most in Gulf South Conference history.

This will be the first time running an athletic department for Wallace, who turns 64 next month. He said he wants to be the kind of athletics director he wanted to work for as a coach.

“The first thing is communication,” Wallace said. “That’s very, very important. Support and communication, and then someone that understood your problems and tried to work hard to correct them.

“What I want is for our coaches to come to me with issues that they have and I want to be able to try my best to help them solve it. It’s all about them being successful, which means our student-athletes are successful.”

Alex Felting, a senior volleyball player from Memphis, is impressed with Wallace’s three national titles.

“I did not know who he was prior to this but it did make an impression, and I’m very excited to see what he’s going to do with all of our programs here,” she said. “I just look for someone (as an athletics director) who understands that sometimes sacrifices have to be made and it is tough, but student-athletes go through a lot. An athletic director that can understand that and help us and our coaches and our program is all anyone can ask for.”

Brett Gilliland, who coached UWA football to the NCAA Division II playoff quarterfinals and a league championship last season, said he is thrilled with the selection of Wallace.

“He’s a legend and someone I really consider a mentor,” Gilliland said. “I’ve gotten to know him over the last several

See UWA, C4
years. It's going to be very good for UWA.

"He came in and recommended the necessary changes (as football coach) and the administration thought enough of him to make them happen, and that's what set the program on the right course. He gets the credit for turning UWA football around, without a doubt.

"When I first got here he called me and talked me through a lot of things and gave me a lot of advice that I've used, so having him here on campus, I'll lean on him a lot."

UWA President Ken Tucker said hiring Wallace was an easy choice.

"Bobby brings so many skills to the table," he said. "He has so many contacts, and Bobby's a people person and a relationship builder. Every decision we make and everything we do is to make our university be better to make an impact on people. He's going to fit in well with all of our leadership and all our coaches and help us to new heights."

Wallace said he doesn't plan to spent a lot of time sitting in his office as he settles into his new job. He'll go out to assess the school's coaches and facilities and call on supporters.

UWA head football coach Bobby Wallace talks to his team while coming off the field after a timeout on Oct. 16, 2010. Wallace and his Tigers beat Henderson State, 40-38. Wallace, who served as UWA head football coach from 2006-10, has returned to the University of West Alabama, this time as athletics director. He was introduced Friday, Aug. 3, 2018, at the news conference at the school. [FILE PHOTO]

UWA has won 11 conference titles in the last seven years across all sports.

"It's not my job to do the coaching. I believe that you hire people and let them do their job," he said. "I just want to be sure that I'm stressing that we graduate our students, that we're sound in what we do and that we have good people in our program. To me, that's the key to success and that brings along the intangibles that help you win."

Wallace knows winning. He wants more championships for UWA.

"We've got to keep going," Wallace said. "I think the greatest goal for any coach would be... if a kid comes and plays four years that he walks away, or she walks away, with a degree and a championship ring. And that's for all sports."

Wallace retired from coaching in late 2016 after a second stint as coach at North Alabama. He has been inducted into the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame, as well as the halls of fame for Division II football, the GSC and UNA.

Wallace and wife Sharon have three children - Robert, Lindsey and Blake — and four grandchildren.

Wallace replaces Stan Williamson, who resigned last week after seven years at the school.

Reach Tommy Deas at tommy.deas@tuscaloosanews.com or at 205-722-0224.
Housing shortage remains after tornado

Jacksonville State University plans to use mobile homes this fall

The Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE – An Alabama university that’s grappling with a housing shortage after a tornado is purchasing mobile homes to provide living space for students this fall.

WBMA-TV reported that Jacksonville State University plans to use 22 mobile homes to house students as classes resume for the new academic year.

Houses and apartments were destroyed and heavily damaged when a tornado struck on March 10, helping create a housing crunch in the city of 12,600 people located about 80 miles east of Birmingham.

The two-bedroom, two-bath mobile units will each house two students. A waiting list for housing includes 150 people, and the mobile homes will be assigned on a first-come basis.

The decision to use mobile homes appeared to be one of the school’s final solutions to the housing problems caused by the tornado, which heavily damaged about two dozen buildings on campus and affected 50 more.

“Unfortunately there’s a stigma to it. Whether it’s fair or not is a totally other issue. It’s one of those things when you realize that when you have no other options that it’s the thing to do,” said Jacksonville State President John Beehler.

Each mobile home will have new appliances, plus hookups for washers and dryers if residents want to bring their own to campus, the school said in a release.

“Frankly these are so nice I think the students will actually enjoy living in them,” said Beehler.

The university also is using other new space to house students.

A recently closed hospital is being used as housing and classroom space for some nursing students, and a former athletic dormitory that had been used for offices and classrooms is being converted back into residential space.

The fall semester begins Aug. 21.
Is there an answer on how to beat Alabama?

By David Whorton
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

LOS ANGELES — The same predicament arises every summer. With a new season approaching, college football must once again ask: How do we beat Alabama?

The Crimson Tide dynasty has now stretched nearly a decade with five national championships and counting.

In the Southeastern Conference, where rivals face this juggernaut on a regular basis, no less than four schools have cherry-picked coaches who used to work for Nick Saban.

But if you’re looking for quick answers, don’t ask Jeremy Pruitt, who jumped from Tuscaloosa to Tennessee in the offseason. When asked if his former boss offered him parting wisdom, Pruitt said: “You think coach Saban is going to give me any advice?”

Championships are only one measure of Alabama’s dominance. The Crimson Tide, who won national titles in the 2009, 2011, 2012, 2015 and 2017 seasons, have three losses in the last three seasons. One of the losses came in the last seconds against Clemson in the 2016 championship game.

Since 2008-09, Alabama has won 90 percent of its games.

“You have to play lights-out to beat a team like that,” Mississippi State quarterback Nick Fitzgerald said.

Fitzgerald might sound simplistic, but the formula behind Alabama’s success isn’t exactly rocket science.

Two seasons ago, quarterback Jake Browning and his Washington team lost to the Crimson Tide in a College Football Playoff semifinal. He describes his own conference — the Pac-12 — as a league of varied schemes ranging from Stanford’s bullish ground game to Washington State’s pass-crazy spread.

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ALABAMA

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Alabama is the epitome of what Browning sees as a basic, Southern approach to the game.

"A lot of the SEC is, 'My players are better than your players, so we're going to beat you," he said.

Saban has forged a reputation as a master recruiter, attracting the biggest and fastest five-star players to his program. This raw talent shows up most clearly on the defensive side of the ball.

The Crimson Tide have ranked among the top 5 defenses in the country in eight of the last 10 seasons. In 2016, they scored 11 touchdowns on interception and fumble returns.

Arizona State coach Herm Edwards mentions something even more impressive.

"How they stop (opponents) is really simple," Edwards said. "They get them in bad downs. They play really good in the red zone."

This consistency is evidence of another crucial dynamic: When all those top-rated recruits arrive in Tuscaloosa, they enter a program where the coach is fanatical about details.

"How we work at Bama, everything, it's just different," linebacker Anfernee Jennings said. "You know when you come to Bama, it's a different environment."

Devotion to preparation was evident in key plays from two recent national title games.

Before the championship game of the 2015 season, the coaching staff noticed something about Clemson's kickoff return scheme. Saban actually smiled on the sideline -- a rarity -- after calling a fourth-quarter onside kick that made the difference in a 45-40 win.

Last season, with his team trailing Georgia 13-0 at halftime, he turned to an unproven freshman at quarterback in the second half.

"Calling on Tua Tagovailoa might have seemed like a desperation move, but it wasn't. Saban had prepared -- and practiced -- all season for the possibility that an opposing defense might shut down his run-oriented starter, Jalen Hurts.

Tagovailoa, possessing a better arm, secured a 26-23 victory with a long touchdown pass in overtime.

"Nick is the best coach in college football," South Carolina coach Will Muschamp said. "From a scheme standpoint, from a recruiting standpoint, from a development standpoint -- you name it, he does an outstanding job."

Several teams have made a run at Alabama in recent seasons, including Clemson, Ohio State, Georgia and -- in the form of two conference upsets -- Mississippi.

Still, the Crimson Tide appear poised for yet another title run, hovering at or near the top of early betting lines. The coaches preseason poll has them at No. 1 by a wide margin.

SEC rivals know what that means. As Auburn coach Gus Malzahn put it: "You've got to beat them ... that's just part of the job description."

Former Saban assistants hired as head coaches include Kirby Smart at Georgia, Mark Dantonio at Michigan State and Jimbo Fisher, who worked under him at Louisiana State and has now taken over at Texas A&M. Muschamp, another protege, understands why major programs harvest from the Saban coaching tree.

"Athletic directors are always looking for the next mold of what could be," the South Carolina coach said. "When you work for coach Saban, it's a total education in the game of football, recruiting, all the things that you've got to do to be successful."

Pruitt, who spent last season as Alabama's defensive coordinator, added that "you'd better write down everything you can, you'd better take it all in," while on the Alabama staff.

Asked about his former assistants, Saban said he tells them to "be who you are" when they move on. He insists that his door remains open.

"There have been many occasions when the guys that are coaching other places, even in our league, call and ask questions," he said. "Sometimes I call them and ask for their advice."

This supposed give-and-take hasn't helped much, with assistants going 0-12 against Saban during his Alabama tenure. Muschamp sounds almost weary when he says: "Somebody's going to eventually beat him."

The rest of the country knows the feeling.
Too big to fail?

Rainer Sabin  rsabin@al.com

Just before his news conference ended at SEC Media Days last month, Nick Saban had a few parting words for the reporters in his midst.

"It was easy today," the Alabama coach said before quickly exiting stage right.

These days nothing seems to faze the man in charge of the most dominant program in college football. Not an incessant stream of questions about his team's quarterback situation. Not sweeping changes on a staff that welcomed six new assistants in the offseason. Not an inexperienced secondary in the process of being completely overhauled. Not a roster which no longer includes 12 names called during the NFL draft in April.

There are some real challenges the Crimson Tide faces as it begins fall camp Friday with just a shade more than four weeks remaining before the start of its next campaign. But the consensus opinion is that mighty Alabama is too big to fail. More pointedly, the general public's faith in Saban is as high as it has ever been. Less than seven months after the Tide vanquished Georgia to claim its 17th national title, the reset button has been pushed and Alabama is once again the No. 1 team in the land as voted on by the coaches.

The betting cognoscenti in Las Vegas agree, having made the Tide the odds-on favorite to win it all come January.

"That's why you come to Alabama — to be on top and hopefully at the end of the season hold up that trophy," said offensive lineman Ross Pierschbacher.

Five of the last nine seasons, Alabama has done that, and the Tide was one second away from having realized that moment each of the past three years.

Yet a case can be made that the Tide isn't invincible. Alabama is breaking in two new coordinators — Tosh Lupoi on defense and Mike Lockleys on offense. Meanwhile, four of the team's position coaches are new.

Some of them will be responsible for shepherding a defense that lost all six starters from the 2017 secondary and has already erased Terrell Lewis from its depth chart after the promising pass rusher tore an anterior cruciate ligament in July.

Lewis' injury would have reverberated more if not for the big question at quarterback, the position at which Jalen Hurts and Tua Tagovailoa have been locked in an ongoing battle. The drama surrounding the Tagovailoa-Hurts contest — and the speculation of a potential high-profile transfer once it's settled — has provided the sport's most juicy storyline while creating the kind of distraction that would sidetrack a more fragile outfit.

But this is Alabama — a program that rarely succumbs to anything, whether it's real or illusionary.

"Losing is never fun and it's not something we're expected to do," said running back Damien Harris. "We're confident in the fact that if we play our best football — offense, defense and special teams — we're capable of being the best team in the country."

Running back Damien Harris

The hoi polloi agree. They look at the Tide's riches on offense, where five-star athletes populate the ranks among the running backs and receivers as well as the line. They see the talent at inside linebacker, where Mack Wilson and Dylan Moses form a dynamic pairing. They recognize the genius of Saban, who absorbed significant changes in the past and still prevailed.

Alabama is No. 1, in part, because it's become hard to fathom what college football would be without the Crimson Tide reigning supreme.

The superpower in Tuscaloosa has become the sport's surest bet.

"You can describe our team (much in the same way as) the uniform in Alabama," Saban said. "It doesn't change much, it doesn't reveal anything, and it's kind of who we are."

Yes, Saban has fashioned the Tide in the image of himself by making his program unrelenting, unflappable and, at this point, unquestionably No. 1.

Rainer Sabin is an Alabama beat writer for the Alabama Media Group. Follow him on Twitter @RainerSabin
No rush to judgment for QBs

Alaska: Tagovailoa may appear to have edge, but don’t count out Hurts

Matt Zenitz  mzenitz@al.com

As has been the case other times this summer, Tua Tagovailoa was at Alabama’s facility bright and early last Saturday. Outside with his brother, father and others, he went through drills and worked out while most other players were probably still asleep.

While the spring didn’t go as planned for Tagovailoa, word is he’s bounced back from his two spring injuries and been working hard this summer during this ongoing starting quarterback competition with Jalen Hurts.

Contrary to popular belief, Tagovailoa hasn’t won the job yet. Additionally, people acting like Hurts is some run-of-the-mill QB need to take a step back and realize he’s a dynamic player that the majority of schools around the country would likely love to have as their quarterback. That said, people in the know will tell you that momentum has continued to build for Tagovailoa this summer and that he enters the start of fall camp on Friday as the clear favorite to win the job.

So why Tua?
It continues to be apparent that the Tide will probably be better in the passing game with Tagovailoa than with Hurts.

That’s not intended as a knock on Hurts. It’s just that, as people in the Alabama building know, Tagovailoa is special as a passer, especially in terms of anticipation, touch and pocket awareness.

Believe it or not, Hurts actually has a stronger arm than Tagovailoa. And, if you lined both quarterbacks up and had them throw at a net, you’d see there isn’t some significant discrepancy in terms of accuracy. But, while most QBs need a receiver to be open in order to complete a pass, the truly special ones throwing-wise have an ability to read a defense at a very high level, anticipate what’s going to happen and can throw a receiver open even if they’re well-covered. Tagovailoa has all that.

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Alabama

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Alabama coach Nick Saban also talks a lot about winning the team. The team’s top receivers — Henry Ruggs, DeVonta Smith and Jerry Jeudy — all came in with Tagovailoa last year and have had a relationship with him dating back to the recruiting process. Also, receivers are naturally going to side with the quarterback that gives them the best chance to catch a lot of passes.

Why it’s too early to write off Hurts, though.

The SEC coach that recently talked to Athlon anonymously about Alabama’s quarterback situation summed it well.

“If only we were all so lucky to have the problem Nick has: Two quarterbacks with the talent to win it all,” that coach told Athlon. “… Don’t believe that idea that if you have two quarterbacks, you don’t have one. That’s ridiculous. We’d all kill for Hurts and Tua.”

Has Hurts struggled as a passer against some of the better defenses Alabama has faced the last couple years? Sure. Did he take advantage of Tagovailoa being out most of the spring? Probably not like he wanted to.

However, there’s something you should keep in mind with Hurts. In addition to the ability to make big plays as a runner and having a better arm than he gets credit for, there’s more trust in him than in Tagovailoa at this point to not make the big mistake that’s going to lose you a game.

That’s a big deal.

Tagovailoa’s a gunslinger. The feeling is: Yes, he’ll probably throw for more yards and more touchdowns but that he’ll likely also have more turnovers.

This isn’t to discredit anything Tagovailoa did in the national title game, but there was some luck involved, too. Besides his early interception, there was another ball thrown into a congested area in the back of the end zone that was nearly picked off. Also, the late game-saving touchdown pass to Calvin Ridley wasn’t actually intended for Ridley. The now-Atlanta Falcons receiver made a great play on the ball that was actually meant for Najee Harris in the back of the end zone.

If you look at his track record with quarterbacks at Alabama, Saban has always gone with guys he trusts will limit mistakes. In 15 games last year, Hurts only had three turnovers while producing 25 touchdowns.

The problem for Hurts is he’s up against a QB with some special upside as a passer and — like in the last three games of last year as well as Alabama’s spring game — he’s had issues against defenses with enough talent to cover the Tide receivers and be able to focus in on limiting Hurts’ production as a runner.

That’s why Hurts is in a position where — even with all of his accomplishments the last two years — he’ll be the underdog to win the starting job entering fall camp.
Will Hurts' candid conversation help or hurt him?

Cecil Hurt

Jalen Hurts wanted to talk. Glaringly obvious as Hurts spoke in the end zone at Bryant-Denny Stadium on Saturday morning, he was frustrated over seven months of silence, an entire spring training where he didn’t get to state his case and a quiet summer that followed. Silently, he’s had to listen while everyone from his head coach to his father to media members who, like it or not, are going to fill the vacuum of silence with opinion and conjecture, gave their own take on the matter.

And fans, so many fans, all of whom have a right to their opinion, but none of whom (and this is true of media members, too) have a direct insight into Hurts’ mind.

So, on Saturday, he spoke.

Hurts answered questions, but you could tell that the answers had been formulating long before the questions were asked. This clearly had been weighing on Hurts all summer. His answers were honest and emotional. They barely touched on the “battle” at the quarterback position with Tua Tagovailoa. Hurts has been through all that before.

The battle he was describing on Saturday was not to be the No. 1 quarterback but, as he put it, “the Number One source” about himself.

We can all relate to frustration. Not many can relate to the frustration of being the No. 1 topic of conversation in an entire football-crazy

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state. That frustration was compounded because much of the speculation was that if Hurts didn’t win the competition, he would transfer or, as it has been put often enough, that he would quit. The second thing that was obvious on Saturday, through all his frustration, was that it stung Hurts to hear that he would walk out on his team, on the school from which he intends to graduate.

There was nothing wrong with Hurts facing the media on Saturday and giving direct, heartfelt answers to questions at a press conference. Alabama made him available — he didn’t go on a social media tirade or a secret crusade. He didn’t dodge or sidestep questions. You have to respect that.

The question becomes, was it wise? Will it help him “win the team?” Will it affect his position in the quarterback battle? How much weight does the ultimate decision-maker, Nick Saban, give to the comments from his starting quarterback for the past two years?

Will he treat the next 30 days as a “this will be settled on the field” situation? Or will the “don’t do anything to draw attention to yourself” edict that came after the “Tua Day” celebration in Hawaii — that was never directly mentioned, but the timing of Saban’s statement was pretty clear — now enter into the process?

This time, the “No. 1 source” is Saban. Did he feel like Hurts called him out for not asking his opinion in the spring, or for telling the assemblage at SEC Media Days “I have no idea” if Hurts would be present for the start of practice? (To be fair, Saban’s very next words were “I expect him to be there,” but that didn’t ring out quite so loudly.) My expectation is that Saban will be less outraged than people think, but not every hurricane makes landfall where you think it will.

There’s a perfectly plausible scenario, and always has been, in which Saban chooses to play Tagovailoa based on his belief that Tagovailoa gives the Alabama team a better chance to win football games. All this off-the-field drama may be irrelevant.

But Jalen Hurts wanted to talk. He spoke what he felt in his heart. Perhaps that will come with a cost, as it often does.

Reach Cecil Hurt at cecil@tidesports.com or 205-722-0225.
Business as usual for UA after Hurts' comments

Cecil Hurt

There was thunder at Alabama's Wednesday football practice—loud rolling claps that made it seem like a casting call for what many expected to be an even greater storm to follow in the post-practice press conference.

Instead, there were no sound effects needed. No pyrotechnics went off. Reporters did not need to wear demolition-site level hearing protection. Instead, Nick Saban handled questions about Jalen Hurts' Saturday comments with unwavering composure.

Hurts' interview circled the college football world pretty quickly when he noted that he felt a lack of communication about his future plans, whether as Alabama's starting quarterback or a transfer. The reactions for three days touched on every imaginable issue from freedom of speech to loyal team leadership. But Nick Saban's reaction was simply this: business as usual.

See HURT, C3
"Look, this is probably a lot more important to people outside this organization than it is to people inside," Saban said. "I don't think it has any effect on our team. I've talked to a lot of our team leaders. The players are focused on what they need to do. The rhetoric will not have anything to do with who's the quarterback. That will obviously be decided on the field by how people execute, how they do their job."

That doesn't mean there won't be speculation. Differing opinions from fans are part of college football. Some fans are perfectly content when their team is winning, regardless of the inner workings of the organization.

Others like to coach their favorite team vicariously. If you need to know how Saban feels about that, remember he decried "rat poison" around the team last year when he felt that media coverage had gotten too positive. So he's not going to feel like every compliment is definitive, or that every complaint, even from a player, is mutinous.

"Every player has a right to express what he feels and what he thinks," Saban said. "And I think he has every right to do that with every coach or anybody in the organization that he has a relationship with, which we certainly do quite often with all players at all positions."

This being Alabama football, conversation is going to continue, and words will be parsed.

There is a possibility that sophomore Tua Tagovailoa wins the job on straight talent and the millions of words written and podcasted in the last seven months are as thin as Himalayan air. There is also a chance that Saban wants to watch a month of Battle of the Gladiators before he gives the imperial thumbs up to the victor. Either way, it was never very likely that Saban was going to give Hurts the heave-ho over his comments.

Maybe this weekend's scrimmage will affirm what he already knows, or maybe it will truly be a piece to what remains, at this point, a puzzle.

If anything changed after Saturday, Saban wasn't about to say so on Wednesday. Again: business as usual.

"The same parameters (exist) that we've talked about before in terms of who wins the team," Saban said. "And winning the team goes along with execution, leadership, players having confidence and belief. And that's not going to change. I don't really have any more to say about it than that.

"I don't think it is anything that has affected our team one way or the other."

Reach Cecil Hurt at Cecil@Tidesports.com or 205-722-0225.
Saban: Hurts’ comments aren’t affecting team

Michael Casagrande mcasagrande@al.com

For nearly a week, the now-famous Jalen Hurts interview has been in the news with opinions running the full spectrum.

On Wednesday evening, Nick Saban had his first opportunity to respond to some of the rare criticism levied by an active Alabama player toward the coaching staff.

"Look, this is probably a lot more important to people outside this organization than it is to people inside," Saban said. "I don't think it has any effect on our team. I've talked to a lot of our team leaders. The players are focused on what they need to do. The rhetoric will not have anything to do with who's the quarterback. That will obviously be decided on the field by how people execute, how they do their job."

"The same parameters that we've talked about before in terms of who wins the team. And winning the team goes along with execution, leadership, players having confidence and belief. And that's not going to change. I don't really have any more to say about it than that. I don't think it is anything that has affected our team one way or the other."

Hurts on Saturday said coaches "didn't want to talk to me" and refuted some things Saban said in response to a question about him at SEC Media Days last month.

In terms of communication, Hurts said coaches never solicited his opinions in the spring.

"No one came up to me the whole spring, coaches included, no one asked me how I felt," Hurts said Saturday at the team's media day. "No one asked me what was on my mind. No one asked me how I felt about the things that were going on. Nobody asked me what my future held."

Saban addressed that first in his answer Wednesday.

"Every player has a right to express what he feels and what he thinks," Saban said. "And I think he has every right to do that with every coach or anybody in the organization that he has a relationship with, which we certainly do quite often with all players at all positions."

Hurts is competing with sophomore Tua Tagovailoa for the starting job after holding it for the past two seasons.
UA has more to focus on than just the QBs

But as early reports from NFL training camps come in, you have to wonder if everything can be replaced at the same level as it was during 2017. Leave the quarterbacks aside for a moment. Can everything else be at the same level, or so close to that level that some improvement in other areas will make up for it?

Nick Saban does not have the penchant for poormouthing that some coaches in Alabama's past might have had. He doesn't cause listeners to leave a media opportunity convinced that the Crimson Tide will be lucky to play .500 football. He's pretty direct about having a good team, but when he talks about areas that will require patience, he hardly seems to be heard even if he is shouting.

"This year's team, we lost a lot of really good football players, especially on defense," Saban said before

See HURT, B4

Even when there's the perception of turmoil, University of Alabama football fans remain supremely confident. They can debate all day about quarterbacks, to choose a random example, but when you ask their expectations given Option "A," they'll say "national championship." But what if Nick Saban chooses Option "B"? "National championship." There may not be an Option "C" on the table, but if there is? "National championship." You get the point.
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August practice began. "We had 10 guys sign NFL contracts. So there's going to be a lot of opportunity for a lot of young players at every position. We've got a few guys coming back up front, we've got a few linebackers coming back, but we still have a lot of opportunity for a lot of young players, especially in the secondary, where we lost the most players."

"So a lot of the questions that you're going to ask me about these young players and how they develop, they are all things that are yet to be determined. They're still going to be determined in the future in terms of how they do ... in fall camp, and when they develop the maturity to go out and play winning football for us."

Still, you hear the reports from the pro camps. Bo Scarbrough is gaining tough yards for the Cowboys, although there does seem to be enough depth to replace him. In the Green Bay Packers' camp, J.K. Scott boomed a half-dozen prodigious punts, including one 62-yard, five-second hang time kick that almost certainly violated Canadian airspace. No one expects another J.K. Scott at Alabama for a generation or so, and the reports on Skyler DeLong's kicking in the open Saturday scrimmage were positive. Still, there are going to be games in which the opponent will pick up five yards here or five yards there, or maybe even a big return. Those yards might not matter - but they might.

The Redskins seem to be thrilled with Shatin Dion Hamilton, pot their highest draft choice from Alabama but the defensive rookie who seems to be picking things up at the fastest pace. Hamilton had the same role at Alabama before he was hurt against LSU, and while the Crimson Tide made adjustments, someone has to fill Hamilton's role (and, as Saban made clear, has to stay healthy.)

It's understandable that people like to focus on controversy, and, if they are worriers, to fret over the possible effects. In the meantime, though, an entire team has to be developed - rebuilt entirely, at some positions - even if it happens without the glare of a big spotlight.

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Learning curve

Lupoi ascends to position of Alabama defensive coordinator, but still seeks improvement

By Ben Jones
Sports Writer

Alabama’s new defensive coordinator doesn’t have to worry about finding his voice. Tosh Lupoi has always been easy to hear on the field at practice. Now he’s speaking up while running meetings and calling plays.

“He’s got high energy,” Crimson Tide outside linebacker Christian Miller said. “You can’t help but pay attention when you’ve got a guy like that. It’s good.”

Like Jeremy Pruitt before him, Lupoi has worked his way up through Alabama’s program after starting in an off-field role. He arrived as an analyst for the 2014 season, then moved to outside linebackers coach for the 2015 season. Unlike Pruitt or Kirby Smart, Lupoi hasn’t spent time as a defensive backs coach.

That’s something the ascendant assistant has had to learn this offseason. He’s gotten help from Nick Saban and co-defensive coordinator Pete Golding.

“I’ve gained a lot of confidence in that, but, of course, I’m still getting better and learning it every single day,” Lupoi said on Saturday. “But that’s something that it’s grown on me and it’s something I take a lot of pride in,

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is trying to know something there that might not have been there five to 10 years ago that wasn't the strength of my knowledge of the game."

Lupoi's name recognition has grown significantly since he arrived at Alabama. He's always had a reputation as one of the nation's best recruiters. Then Lupoi's outside linebackers helped create one of the nation's best pass rushes in the last three seasons.

"I think he's really developed as a coach," Crimson Tide head coach Nick Saban said. "I think he's taken it upon himself to not want to be a guy that was viewed just as a recruiter or just as a guy that could coach the front. He's really, really committed himself to learning the big picture, the coverages, the secondary. I spent a significant amount of time with him doing that. I think he's made a tremendous amount of improvement."

Co-defensive coordinator Pete Golding can also help with that transition. Golding has more than a decade of experience coaching defensive backs and also had to call plays at UT-San Antonio.

Lupoi eschewed other defensive coordinator opportunities to stay in Tuscaloosa, even when he remained as an assistant coach.

"When I was fortunate enough to come here in the beginning, I came here for a reason, and that was one, to be at the Mecca of college football and be coaching with and under one of the best coaches ever to live," Lupoi said.

"No matter what title I have, the fact is we're in an environment here where we are challenged every day, the most competitive environment there is on the college football stage; a constant football environment of growing and loving, which I love to do."

Another difficulty facing Lupoi will be making play calls promptly as the clock winds down. That's not completely new to him, but he'll be counted on to do it much more now.

"You have to process the information quicker," he said. "As an assistant where I've had some opportunities in the past where I might be able to do some play-calling. It's tough to do it full time. You have to do it as fast as possible to get the guys in the best possible positions."

Other parts of the job already suit him well. Players said his energy keeps their attention in meetings. His communication skills, always on display in practice with the outside linebackers, now benefit the rest of the defense.

"One thing that he does really well, he's a really good teacher," Miller said. "He likes to break things down to the concepts."

That way, you learn the foundation first and he builds from there."

Lupoi is still learning as well. There's still more than three weeks until Alabama's opener on Sept. 1 when he'll be tested in game action for the first time. Until then, there's time to prepare.

That room to grow is part of what excites Lupoi every day. The new defensive coordinator still has more to learn.

"Waking up this morning, I love this occupation so much because it provides the opportunity to continue to grow and learn and that's what we're doing every day here," Lupoi said. "As far as preparation every single day here, morning, night, working with coverage assignments and adjustments so we can teach things to players correctly and clearly and hopefully have that show up on the field."

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Nick Saban is not the Wizard of Oz. He informed the public of this on Saturday.

This should come as no surprise. Still, some people among Alabama’s large and diverse fan base still seem to expect that the head coach is going to appear as a giant green head, flanked by flashing lights and thunderous sound effects and make booming proclamations.

This is not the Emerald City. Saban has never worked that way at Alabama and was not going to start on Saturday with a statement about the starting quarterback, the topic that has raged since January. The head coach will bide his time, no matter what happened at Bryant-Denny Stadium.

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That statement covers no new ground. Game-day decisions, even competition that carries over into the first few games of the season, has been the Saban approach since he arrived in Tuscaloosa. That's the way Jalen Hurts won the job to begin with, at the start of 2018. The approach has netted five college football championships and come close to four more. What's more, none of the close calls had anything to do with how the starting quarterback position was handled in August.

To be clear, Saban's "Wizard of Oz" statement had nothing to do with Hurts or Tua Tagovailoa. He was instead commenting, light-heartedly, on how he is subject to the laws and rules of the NCAA when it comes to eligibility and transfers. The magic wand he chose to illustrate his point was his always-handly podium soda bottle. ("The wand chooses the Wizard, Mr. Potter.") But you can use almost any example at this point to illustrate the fact Saban is not about to magically change what he has done for the past 11 years.

He may not be the Wizard, after all — I will not waver from that opinion unless the words "Surrender Dorothy" appear in black smoke above the practice field on Monday. But he is the supreme authority in such matters. He doesn’t need the smoke and mirrors, the wheels and gadgets, for he is no humbug. His voice carries full weight.

Since before spring training, it's been said, emphasized and written in this column that there is every chance Tagovailoa will ultimately be the starting quarterback based strictly on ability. The sophomore seemed, not just in "one half of football" against Georgia but in all of his appearances in 2017, like a prodigy. He's going to play — only the role is undefined.

No statistics were released from the scrimmage. Scrimmage stats went out with the fax machine. The media was not allowed to watch and the Saturday crowd was limited mainly to family, friends and former players. The next scrimmage will have far larger attendance and thus an equal explosion of opinions. At least one of those who was in attendance, former defensive back Will Lowery, a cogent observer and a Twitter aficionado — he was invited to take over our Tidesports Twitter account for an Alabama game last fall — declared the race for Tagovailoa before the polls even closed, adding that "it isn't even close." To be fair, Lowery also echoed the "no announcement before the first game" opinion. And while there's no way to confirm his opinion without first-hand observation, there's no reason to assume it is wrong.

Thus, in some circles, the impatience grows. Saban’s final word on the matter on Saturday: it’s cumulative. That means waiting until he decides the time is right, and no other.

Reach Cecil Hurt at cecil@tidesports.com or 205-722-0225.
First scrimmage gives Alabama first fall test

By: Ben Jones

It’s time to put the ball down and see how it plays out.

The season opener for Alabama is still three weeks off, but the Crimson Tide will gather for its first scrimmage of fall camp on Saturday. The scrimmage at Bryant-Denny Stadium is closed to the public.

“Obviously what we’re looking for on Saturday in the scrimmage is who can go out there and have the maturity and focus, mental toughness, mental discipline to be able to stick with good play, bad play, play the next play,” coach Nick Saban said Wednesday. “Keep their poise and that goes a long way into telling you whether a guy is emotionally really to play. Physical talent is one thing, but emotionally mature enough to be able to do is with consistency is another thing that I think has to be evaluated.”

Alabama enters the scrimmage mostly healthy. Saban said Wednesday that freshman defensive lineman Stephon Wynn Jr. had a ligament strain in practice on Tuesday that won’t require surgery, but will keep him out for some time.

Saban also said he was pleased with the first five days of practice. Alabama had its first day of practice in full pads on Wednesday following the conclusion of its acclimatization period, then had another practice in full pads Thursday. The team worked in shoulder pads and shorts on Friday.

The scrimmage will be an opportunity for players to show how they respond in a game-like situation. That can be especially important for young players or players hoping to take a bigger role this fall.

“I think that we have some talented players that are young players that made contribution last year, and I think those guys are going to be really good players,” Saban said. “And I think the experience they gained last year is going to be very helpful to them. Probably what’s more concerning to me is we have young players who weren’t in the program or young players who didn’t play a year ago that don’t have experience that may get called to duty and have an opportunity to make a contribution.”
Eye-opening scrimmage

Alabama's first preseason scrimmage reveals good and bad

By Ben Jones
Sports Writer

Alabama's first scrimmage of fall camp may not have been surprising to football coach Nick Saban, but it was still revealing. The Crimson Tide starters mostly played with poise, while many young players showed they still have a ways to go.

"I think that this scrimmage was really pretty much what we thought it would be," Saban said. "I think the players that have experience, that have played before, really played well. The first teams operated pretty well for the most part. Much better execution with the first defense, first offense, whatever it was."

No statistics were available from the scrimmage, which was closed to the public and the media.

Players were put on the field in position to make calls on their own and execute on the fly. That led to mistakes from some players, which were compounded when other players tried to adjust to cover for those errors.

"What happens when you're not responsible enough to do your job? It creates an issue for somebody else, then they try to make up for what you did, then they can't do what they normally would do," Saban said.

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Alabama vs. Louisville

When: Saturday, Sept. 1, at 7 p.m. CT
Where: Camping World Stadium in Orlando
TV: ABC
Radio: 95.3 FM, 102.9 FM

Online
More photos from Alabama's scrimmage on www.tuscaloosanews.com
they're supposed to do, and you don't have any team execution," Saban said. "So it all comes back to every individual having the discipline, the mental toughness, the focus to be able to effectively do their job."

Inside linebackers Mack Wilson and Dylan Moses both played well, Saban said. But other players at that position struggled with missed tackles, missed assignments and other errors.

"It's not out of a lack of effort or lack of trying," Saban said. "It's knowledge, it's experience, it's discipline, it's eye control - looking at the right things. We need for those guys to improve, no doubt."

There were no questions about the performance of quarterbacks Jalen Hurts and Tua Tagovailoa. In his opening statement, Saban said the competition between the pair would continue.

"We're going to evaluate the quarterback situation," Saban said. "We're going to keep looking at the guys. What somebody did today or didn't do today isn't going to win or lose them the job. It's going to be the cumulative effect and the consistency that they practice with and play with over time. That's in fairness to both players who are really good competitors and really working hard, really doing a good job. We don't have much more to say than that about that situation."

**Alabama adds Ale Kaho**

Freshman Ale Kaho went through drills before Saturday's scrimmage with the inside linebackers. Kaho, a 2018 recruit who initially signed with Washington, committed nationally and a four-star recruit. Alabama lost both starters at inside linebacker from last year and is looking for depth at the position, though Saban declined to speculate on how soon Kaho could be prepared to help the team.

"It depends on how fast he learns, it depends on a lot of things - what kind of condition is he in?" Saban said. "How much can we do with him? Lot of questions, and they're not bad questions. We're glad to have the guy here and we're looking forward to the opportunity practice in shorts and a jersey, then two practices in shoulder pads before he can wear full pads.

**Injury update**

Three Alabama defenders missed Saturday's scrimmage due to injury. Sophomore safety Daniel Wright was out with a shoulder injury. The severity of the injury remains to be determined, but it could keep him out for an extended period.

"I don't think we've come to a conclusion on what the best course of action is," Saban said. "Dr. Cain and family are sort of working through that right now. We're hoping this is something that can be managed and maybe he can play this season, but that kind of remains to be seen."

Senior outside linebacker Jamey Mosley was out with a separated shoulder. That is expected to prevent him from practicing for a few days, but Saban was hopeful he could return for the season opener. Freshman defensive
Alabama's Hale Hentges excels on the field, in the classroom and through community service

By Tommy Deas
Executive Sports Editor

Some college football players aspire to win the Heisman Trophy. Others covet various awards given to the best player at their position.

Hale Hentges, Alabama's tight end from Jefferson City, Missouri, was elated to see his name on a watch list last month. And while he was listed as a candidate for the Mackey Award for the best player at his particular position, it was his recognition on the preseason list for the Wuerffel Trophy that most excited him.

"Definitely a surprise," Hentges said. "Obviously I have extremely high goals for myself, but just seeing it actually in writing is something that has been extremely remarkable, and I can't express my gratitude to people that put me on that list."

Danny Wuerffel, for whom the award is named, played quarterback at Florida in the 1990s, but the award isn't position-specific. It was created in 2005 and is awarded by the Emerald Coast All Sports Association at its banquet in Fort

Alabama vs. Louisville

When: Saturday, Sept. 1, at 7 p.m. CT
Where: Camping World Stadium in Orlando
TV: ABC
Radio: 95.3 FM, 102.9 FM

See HENTGES, C4
Walton Beach, Florida, to the Football Bowl Association player who "best combines exemplary community service with academic and athletic achievement." Orlando Sentinel columnist Mike Bianchi nicknamed it "the Humanitarian Heisman."

The 6-foot-5, 254-pound senior has played in 43 games in his Alabama career, making 13 starts. He has caught 11 passes for 90 yards with three touchdowns, but has made his mark mostly as a blocker.

It's the kind of unselfish sort of role you might expect from someone who devotes himself to service to others.

"I feel like I hang my hat on blocking," he said. "I know that so many people overlook that, but to just be out there and be able to do your job every single play is something that I take a lot of pride in."

"Hopefully people take note of that because that's what's important to me, just getting my job done."

Hentges graduated magna cum laude with a bachelor's degree in marketing in May, finishing with a 3.744 grade-point average. He has made the Dean's List six times, the SEC's academic honor roll three times and is currently enrolled in graduate school working toward a master's degree in marketing.

His community service includes volunteer work to help build houses for Habitat for Humanity, hospital visits on Alabama's bowl trips and involvement in the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

Former Crimson Tide offensive lineman Barrett Jones won the Outland Trophy, the Rimington Trophy, the Jacobs Blocking Trophy and the William B. Campbell Trophy, along with first-team All-America recognition and other awards. He won the Wuerffel Trophy in 2011 and ranks it among his highest honors.

"It means a lot to me because the awards that were not just football were cool," Jones said. "The fact that it was supposed to be a combination of academics, athletics and community service, I always wanted to be well-rounded and I think that's what this award is all about: not just contribute on the field, but also in the classroom and mainly the community service aspect of it seems to be maybe the most important aspect of this trophy."

"All the winners look forward to getting back together every year. It's a neat deal. Other than (Tim) Tebow it's not the same name-brand type guys, but it's a bunch of great dudes who have had very successful careers after football doing different things. It's a really cool community and a really cool award."

That's why Hentges was so proud to see his name on the watch list. He's a player at the top program in the country, but wants you to know that there is more to him than football.

"So many people just look at us strictly as football players because that's all they ever see, but it's a community, it's a lifestyle, it's everything that you do here," he said. "It's so much more than just football, so I'm glad to be able to be on that watch list to kind of show some of that hard work that I've been doing off the field."

Reach Tommy Deas at tommy@tidesports.com or at 205-732-0224.
Alabama lands commitment from 2020 in-state defensive back

By Ben Jones
Sports Writer

Alabama football added its seventh overall commitment for the class of 2020 on Monday Morning. Hewitt-Trussville defensive back Malachi Moore announced he would join the Crimson Tide in a video on 247Sports.com.

“First and foremost, I would like to thank God,” Moore said in the video. “Without him, nothing is possible. I would like to thank my parents for all the sacrifices they’ve made for my brother and I. Without them, I wouldn’t be the person I am today. Thank you to my teammates and coaches for always pushing me to my limit every day and not letting me get complacent. Thank you to my trainers, Justin Woodall and Kevin Brown, for assisting in my skill development. Finally, I would like to thank all the universities that have offered me a scholarship. With all that said, home is where the heart is. Roll Tide.”

Hewitt-Trussville’s roster for the upcoming season now includes four commitments for Alabama. Pierce Quick, a five-star offensive tackle in the class of 2019, has part of Alabama’s recruiting efforts since he committed in 2017. Quarterback Paul Tyson, a 2019 prospect and the great-grandson of legendary coach Paul W. “Bear” Bryant, is also committed. 2020 wide receiver commit Dazalin Worsham is a fellow member of Moore’s class.

Moore is ranked as a four-star prospect and the No. 148 overall player in the class of 2020 according to the 247Sports Composite. He’s the No. 3 corner in the nation and the No. 7 recruit in the state of Alabama. Including Moore, Alabama now holds commitments from four of the top seven in-state players for 2020. Tennessee has one commitment, while the other two remain undecided.

Moore is the second defensive back commitment in the class of 2020, joining four-star prospect Javier Morton of Stone Mountain, Ga.

Moore is entering his junior season this fall. He is listed at 5-foot-11 and 171 pounds.

Alabama’s 2020 class is currently ranked second in the nation behind Miami, according to 247Sports.

Reach Ben Jones at ben@tidesports.com or 205-722-0196.
Wilson excited about new role

By Ben Jones
Sports Writer

John Parker Wilson never has strayed far from Alabama football. The former Alabama quarterback has remained close to the program while living in Birmingham after his NFL career ended. Now he’ll be back at Bryant-Denny Stadium on Saturdays this fall.

The Birmingham native was named as the new color analyst for Alabama’s radio broadcasts in late July. He’ll join veteran play-by-play voice Eli Gold.

“Beyond excited about it,” Wilson said last week. “Huge honor to be able to it, to join a legend like Eli, to be able to be a part of this team again. But it’s also a huge responsibility. The guys are going back to training camp right now and I’m going to do the same getting ready for the season.”

Wilson was in attendance at practice when Alabama opened fall camp on Friday.

Wilson was the incumbent starter at quarterback when Nick Saban arrived in 2007. He started three seasons in Tuscaloosa and finished his career first in program history in completions, passing touchdowns and passing yards, though all three records were surpassed by AJ McCarron. He spent 2010-12 with the Atlanta Falcons, then signed with the Jacksonville Jaguars in 2012 and spent the 2013 preseason with the Pittsburgh Steelers.

“I grew up, my dad and brother and I, we’d watch football games with Eli and Kenny (Stabler) turned up (on the radio),” Wilson said. “So, growing up listening to

Chris Black drafted

Former Alabama wideout Chris Black is one of 100 players who have signed with the Alliance of American football players. Black signed with the Birmingham franchise, which will be coached by Tim Lewis.

Black played from 2013-15 at Alabama, catching 25 passes for 290 yards. He played his senior season at Missouri, gaining 257 yards on 17 receptions. Black’s junior season at UA was cut short by injury. He transferred to Missouri as a graduate transfer and was able to play the next season.

The league will begin play in February 2019 with franchises in Birmingham, Atlanta, Memphis, Orlando, Phoenix, Salt Lake City, San Antonio and San Diego.

Tommy Deas contributed to this story. Reach Ben Jones at ben@tidesports.com or 205-722-0196.
Alabama basketball duo invited to Nike Skills Academy

Staff report

Alabama men's basketball sophomores John Petty and Herbert Jones have been invited to participate in the 2018 Nike Basketball Skills Academy on Aug. 8-12, in Los Angeles.

Both Petty and Jones will have a chance to train with current and former NBA players.

"This is an incredible opportunity for both of us," Petty said. "We are excited to represent The University of Alabama and our basketball program in Los Angeles, and we're looking forward to learning a lot."

Said Jones, a Hale County graduate, "I am very excited to be invited and participate in the Nike Skills Academy. This is a great opportunity for both of us. I expect to learn a lot, and we just want to take advantage of this opportunity and have fun."

The Crimson Tide duo is among approximately 60 of the nation's elite collegiate and high school players who were selected by invitation only to participate in the academy, which began in 2015 and was attended by former Alabama standout Collin Sexton a year ago. Sexton was selected No. 8 overall in the 2018 NBA Draft by the Cleveland Cavaliers this past June.

Last season, Petty played in all 36 games, and made 20 starts, averaged 10.2 points and 2.6 rebounds per game. He set a freshman school record by going 90-of-242 (.372) from 3-point range, while averaging 2.5 per game, which ranked fifth in the Southeastern Conference.

Jones quickly became known as one of the top defensive players in the conference and was chosen by the UA coaching staff as the team's most outstanding defensive player. He recorded a school-record 23 charges taken in 2017-18, while also leading the Tide with 44 steals. He finished the season averaging 4.2 points, 3.5 rebounds and 1.3 steals per game, which ranked seventh in the SEC, across 35 contests.
Johnson talks new NCAA proposals

Alaska basketball coach taking a wait-and-see position

By Cecil Hurt
Sports Editor

University of Alabama basketball coach Avery Johnson said Wednesday he thought an NCAA reform allowing players that enter the NBA Draft and participate in the Draft Combine to return to school if they go undrafted was "generally positive move," although he added that he needed more time to review the entire package of proposals.

"I'm generally in favor of anything that allows our student-athletes an opportunity to continue their education," Johnson said. "The rest of the Inside

Crimson Tide duo invited to attend Nike Basketball Skills Academy. C2

proposals, I'll have to look at more closely."

Other changes announced by the NCAA on Wednesday allow what it defines as "elite players" to retain agents beginning when they are in high school, changing the basketball recruiting calendar to allow April access and proposing "stiffer penalties" for rule breakers. Broader amateurism issues were not addressed.

Johnson said he was disappointed that a proposal which would have allowed two additional staff members to have on-the-floor coaching duties was not addressed.

The changes reflect in part some of the recommendations made in April by the Rice Commission.

That commission, led by former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, was formed in response to an FBI investigation into payments from shoe companies to coaches and other individuals in return for steering players to certain schools.

Reach Cecil Hurt at cecil@tidesports.com or 205-722-0225
UA basketball lands four-star guard prospect

By Cecil Hurt
Sports Editor

Jaylen Forbes, a 6-foot-5 shooting guard from Florence, Miss., announced on his social media account that he has made a verbal commitment to the University of Alabama basketball program.

Forbes is rated as the No. 2 prospect in Mississippi and the No. 100 prospect nationally by 247Sports. He was offered by Alabama in June and chose the Crimson Tide over Kansas State, UAB and other offers.

"First and foremost, I would like to thank the man above for giving me the opportunity to play the game I love," Forbes said on his Twitter account. "I would also like to thank my mom and dad for always pushing me to be great at whatever I do, and my family for always supporting me. To all the coaches that have ever coached me and all the teammates I've ever played with, I thank y'all...

"The process has been a great one! With that said, I will be furthering my education and taking my talents to...THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA."

Forbes is Alabama's second commitment, joining 6-foot-5 Juwan Gary of Columbia, S.C. UA also had an earlier decommitment from Florida forward Diante Smith, who is exploring other options.

The early signing period begins in November.
Kira Lewis plans to enroll at UA on Aug. 17 to be eligible for basketball activities

By Cecil Hurt
Sports Editor

Kira Lewis, the top backcourt prospect in the state of Alabama and a recruiting priority for University of Alabama basketball coach Avery Johnson's staff for nearly three years, has committed to the Crimson Tide.

Lewis made the announcement on Friday afternoon via his Twitter account. He also announced he would classify for entry in the class of 2018. Lewis plans to enroll for fall classes at Alabama on August 17 and will be eligible to take part in basketball-related activities when he does so.

The 6-foot-3, 160-pound point guard had a strong summer on the AAU circuit. Lewis made an official visit to Alabama last weekend, including a church visit with Johnson on Sunday.

Lewis, from Hazel Green High School, is rated as the No. 30 prospect in America by 247Sports 2019 composite rankings and No. 26 in the Top247 2019 overall rankings. He recently narrowed his list of potential schools to 12, including national programs like Kansas as well as SEC programs Auburn, LSU, Georgia and Ole Miss and Alabama.

Lewis is Alabama's third commitment of the summer, although his impact on recruiting rankings may depend on his decision regarding reclassification.

The Crimson Tide has commitments for its 2019-20 class — guard Juwan Gary from Columbia, South Carolina, and shooting guard Jaylen Forbes of Florence, Mississippi. The Crimson Tide staff would reportedly like to add at least two more players, and possibly three, to the 2019-2020 class.
Alabama announces 2018-19 men's golf schedule

Staff report

The Alabama men’s golf team, which second at the NCAA Championship last season, will play five tournaments in the spring and five more in the fall in the upcoming season. UA released the schedule Monday.

In the fall, Alabama will open the season at the Carpet Capital Collegiate at the Farm Club in Dalton, Ga., on Sept. 7-9. Alabama finished tied for first with Georgia Tech at least year’s event. The Crimson Tide will then play in the Olympia Fields Fighting Illini Invitational on Sept. 14-16 outside of Chicago.

Alabama will host the Jerry Pate National Intercollegiate in Vestavia Hills at Old Overton Club on Oct. 8-9. UA has won the event nine of the last 12 years, including last year. UA will compete in the U.S. Collegiate Championships in Atlanta on Oct. 19-21 and play in the Golf Channel televised East Lake Cup, also in Atlanta, on Oct. 29-31.

Alabama will play in the Puerto Rico Classic on Feb. 17-19 to open its spring season. The Crimson Tide will visit San Jose del Cabo, Mexico, for the Querencia Cabo Collegiate on March 3-5 and play in the Longer Invitational – an event UA has won five of the last eight years – in Greensboro, Ga., on March 15-17.

To round out the spring regular-season schedule, Alabama will play in the John Hayt Intercollegiate in Jacksonville, Fla., on March 31-April 1 and participate in the Shoal Creek Intercollegiate in Birmingham on April 15-16.

The SEC Championship will be held April 24-28 at St. Simons Island, Ga.
Alabama's Gillman wins US Women's Amateur

Crimson Tide junior joins Emma Talley as UA's second U.S. Amateur champion

Staff report

KINGSTON SPRINGS, Tenn. — Alabama's Kristen Gillman jumped out to a 5-up lead after the morning round on her way to a 7-and-6 victory over teammate Jiwon Jeon to win the 2018 U.S. Women's Amateur at the par-71, 6,365-yard Golf Club of Tennessee on Sunday.

With the win, Gillman joins former Crimson Tide All-American Emma Talley as Alabama's second U.S. Amateur champion. Talley took home the title at the 2013 tournament in Charleston, S.C. The title is also the second of Gillman's career. The Austin, Texas, native won the 2014 U.S. Amateur at Glen Cove, N.Y., as a high schooler. Gillman is also just the sixth

See GILLMAN, C4

GILLMAN

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"It feels incredible to be able to win a second time," Gillman said following the match. "It's a great accomplishment and something that's hard to do because this tournament has all of the best amateur players, so I'm really proud to be able to do it again."

Sunday's matchup was the first championship match to feature two college golfers from the same school in the 118-year

history of the U.S. Women's Amateur.

Gillman tied for 27th at the 2018 U.S. Open in June and was a member of the victorious U.S. teams at the Palmer and Curtis cups in June and July, respectively. In late July she won the LPGA of Japan's Century 21 Ladies Tournament, beating a field that included more than 100 professional golfers.

The victory also earned Gillman an invitation to play on the U.S. team that will compete in the Women's World Amateur Team Championship, August 29-Sept. 1, in Kildare, Ireland.

"Kristen's victory today places her among the elite female amateur golfers of all time," Alabama head coach Mic Potter said after the match. "Winning multiple U.S. Amateurs is a rare accomplishment. I'm also proud of Jiwon for making it to the finals. This will be an experience that will serve her well in the future. Lauren Stephenson had an amazing week as well, coming within one shot of playing in the final herself. It is truly an honor to have all three of these women associated with our program."

Alabama opens its 2018-19 season at the ANNIKA Intercollegiate, Sept. 17-19, in Lake Elmo, Minn.
Harvard’s Education in Discrimination

The Trump Administration in July withdrew Obama-era guidance that gave colleges a wink and a nod to racially discriminate. This means that colleges like Harvard that use racial preferences in admissions will receive more legal scrutiny, and the examination should be instructive.

Between 2011 and 2016, the Obama Education Department issued seven notices advising colleges how they may legally promote racial diversity. The 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibits racial discrimination by institutions receiving federal funds. But the Supreme Court has held that colleges may consider race in admissions as long it isn’t the “decisive” factor. Quotas and point systems are forbidden.

The Obama department advised colleges to consider race as part of what it called an “individualized, holistic" review of all applicants. Colleges were urged to consider race-neutral alternatives, but that they need not be adopted if they are "unworkable. In other words, it’s the thought that counts. Many colleges took the guidance as cover to discriminate.

Harvard’s practices will be the first to be examined under this new spotlight. Students for Fair Admissions has sued the school for discriminating against Asian-American applicants and unconstitutionally favoring other minority groups. The case hasn’t gone to trial, but the plaintiff’s group’s legal filings based on discovery and depositions are revealing the secrets of Harvard’s use of race.

Consider Harvard’s “holistic” admissions review. Applicants are rated on a scale of one to six on academics, extracurricular activities, athletics and highly subjective “personal” criteria. Admissions officers also assign applicants an overall score.

According to Students for Fair Admissions, Asian-Americans received higher extracurricular and academic ratings than other racial groups. They also received higher scores from alumni interviewers. But they were rated disproportionately lower on personal criteria. Only about one in five Asian-Americans in the top 10% of academic performers received a “2” personal rating. Yet blacks and Hispanics with much lower grades and SAT scores received high personal ratings.

Asian-Americans also disproportionately received lower composite scores. Blacks in the top 10% of academic performers were three times more likely than Asian-Americans to receive a “2” overall rating (“1” is the best). A sample of applicant summary sheets disproportionately refer to Asian-Americans as “busy and bright” and “standard strong” — labels that liberals might call micro-aggressions.

Following complaints of discrimination, Harvard’s Office of Institutional Research (OIR) in 2013 produced three internal reports showing its admissions process was biased against Asian-Americans. Harvard disclosed the reports during discovery in the lawsuit. One report found that purely “demographic” factors reduced the share of admitted Asian-Americans by 30% while increasing the proportion of admitted Latinos by about 140% and blacks by 370%.

OIR shared its studies with Harvard administrators who did not ask the researchers questions, suggest further investigation or publish the findings. Were administrators unperturbed or merely uninterested?

By contrast, Harvard published a prescriptive report in 2015 to improve diversity on campus that suggested, among other things, changing objects in a classroom “from those that are conventionally associated with the dominant group to objects that minoritized subjects can better relate to.” Minoritized?

The university also formed what appears to have been a Potemkin committee in 2017 to investigate “race neutral” alternatives. Its conclusion: Race-neutral alternatives were not “workable.” The committee said Harvard “could not significantly increase its financial aid budget” to attract more minority applicants “without detracting from other commitments.” If Harvard’s $37 billion endowment is insufficient, maybe it should stop wasting money on perfunctory studies.

Harvard denies that it discriminates and in a legal filing 10 days ago called the statistical analysis by Students for Fair Admissions “deeply flawed.” Harvard said that “the work done by OIR employees was not intended to address whether Asian-American applicants were experiencing discrimination and did not answer that question.” The school has so far resisted producing student essays and teacher recommendations that may shed more light.

The Supreme Court said in Village of Arlington Heights (1976) that an “invidious discriminatory purpose” may be gleaned from facially neutral policies—i.e., policies that don’t discriminate explicitly—based on “the degree of disproportionate racial effect, if any, of the policy” and “the justification, or lack thereof” for the effect, among other things. And under the Court’s Fisher decision (2013), colleges must demonstrate that their use of racial preferences is narrowly tailored to achieving the benefits of a diverse student body. On the evidence so far, Harvard has not done so.

Fisher is a constitutional muddle and a future Supreme Court should overturn it, but in the meantime it’s the law. Harvard and other schools are now on notice that they may not discriminate on the sly.
Temple’s M.B.A. Misreporting Draws Ire

University alumni, professors seek more details on falsification of data used in rankings

BY KELSEY GEE
AND JANAKI CHADHA

Temple University alumni and staff are voicing frustration with how administrators have handled a brewing M.B.A.-rankings scandal that has prompted federal and state investigations into whether employees used deceptive marketing practices to recruit students.

Some former students say they fear the controversy will leave a stain on their résumés after the university disclosed last week that as part of U.S. News & World Report’s annual rankings process, employees at its Fox School of Business submitted falsified test-score and student-loan data for several degree programs, including its flagship two-year M.B.A. and its executive M.B.A.

A university-commissioned probe previously determined Fox staff sent false student data and outcome information about its online M.B.A. program over the past four years.

Several professors said students deserved more explanation about how the Fox program data was inflated. Temple’s online M.B.A. program—which costs roughly $60,000—had been rated the nation’s best by U.S. News since 2014 before it disclosed the misreporting to the magazine earlier this year.

Other faculty have publicly defended the school, saying the data discrepancies shouldn’t take away from the overall quality of Fox’s programs.

“A university’s primary obligation is to its students,” said Temple economist Doug Webber, who in July wrote on Twitter that Fox students deserved a refund for programs that were inaccurately marketed as top-ranked.

Temple fired Moshe Porat, dean of the Fox school for 22 years, last month over the scandal and appointed an interim leader of the business school. The now Fox dean, Ron Anderson, “is committed to taking the actions that will restore its reputation,” Ray Betzner, a Temple spokesman said. “He will also ensure the school’s focus remains on the delivery of high-quality programs and student services.”

Charles Dhanaraj, a professor of strategy at Fox, said the trickle of disclosures about information submitted for the rankings had cast doubt over the accuracy of other data concerning Fox degree programs.

“Students are wondering, ‘What more have I been cheated out of?’” he said. He added that the university should also scrutinize other staff and the processes that made the misreporting possible. “Ifow did this go undetected for four years?” he said.

Tom Clare, a defamation lawyer for Mr. Porat, said the former dean was “saddened and frustrated by the way Temple has handled this.”

Temple President Richard Englert last week said the university continues to review Fox rankings-data submissions and to update the U.S. Education Department and Pennsylvania Attorney General’s Office.
U.S. needs to get smart about college outcomes

Americans with bachelor's degrees stand to make $1 million more in their careers than those with just high school diplomas. Meanwhile, the sticker prices of colleges and loan-default rates have soared, and only 60 percent of enrollees earn a degree within six years. It's never been more important for students and their families to choose the right school.

A minor outbreak of cooperation in Congress could soon make this a little easier. Broadly bipartisan bills in both chambers would build on previous measures to make the costs and benefits of higher education a bit less opaque.

The College Scorecard, devised by the Obama administration, offers prospective students and their families data on admissions, average costs, availability of aid, student demographics and, perhaps most important, graduation rates and median earnings— all on a user-friendly website.

But the scorecard has its shortcomings. In particular, important information is based only on students who receive some sort of federal financial aid. This stems from a 2008 congressional ban on a larger federal database of disaggregated student information. As a result, neither the Education Department nor the National Center for Education Statistics, an independent federal agency, can gather comprehensive data and align it with information from the IRS, Social Security Administration and Department of Veterans' Affairs. Universities are required to report some additional information, but this too is incomplete.

The new proposals would overturn the ban and allow the government to release new metrics on "student progression"—school-specific information on performance by transfer students, veterans and those receiving Pell Grants; post-graduation job and earnings results broken down by majors or academic programs; and graduation rates for nontraditional students such as part-time enrollees.

The bills would let the government access raw data provided by the universities, which would free those institutions from having to re-crunch data every time the Education Department asks. The information could help to streamline the student-loan process, and shed light on the importance of economic background, the value of remedial coursework, and whether first-generation students are at a disadvantage.

The bills have sponsors spanning the ideological spectrum from Elizabeth Warren to Orrin Hatch, and support from John Cornyn, the second-ranking Republican in the Senate. They're supported by state universities and community colleges, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Business Roundtable, and veterans' groups.

So what's the problem? First, the Education Department is reportedly set to unveil a new set of rules that would make public graduates' economic outcomes by major, but otherwise suffers from the same limitations as the current college scorecard. The worry is that lawmakers may deem this sufficient and allow the far superior congressional bills to die.

Second, Virginia Foxx, the North Carolina Republican who leads the House education committee and was behind the 2008 information ban, continues to cite privacy concerns. These are misplaced. The measures have adequate protections, including rules against disclosing personal information such as health data and citizenship status.

Congress should get on with it. This is an area where greater transparency is long overdue. Students and their families can't afford to be uneducated about higher education.
Government ‘transparency’ has gone too far

By: Mitch Daniels

Dave Eggers’s 2013 novel “The Circle” depicts a world where demands for “openness” annihilate privacy and personal autonomy, creating a dystopian nightmare. Public officials in the tale try to outdo each other in going “clear” by wearing body cameras and microphones every waking moment. For most readers, the book is farfetched science fiction, but for those active in public life, Eggers’s conception doesn’t seem all that implausible.

It’s hard to determine when too much of a good thing becomes truly too much. And the more laudable the goal, the harder it generally is to reel in the excess, because any suggested retrenchment is viewed as an abandonment of the goal itself. At the risk of being misconstrued, I venture the heretical thought that we have overshot in the pursuit of governmental “openness” and “transparency.”

There’s no question that American government at all levels is better off for the open-door and open-record reforms of the past half-century. Knowing that the public is watching, public officials generally behave more responsibly in the conduct of their duties.

I’m a true believer. As the director of the Office of Management and Budget in the early 2000s, I worked in perhaps surprising collaboration with Ralph Nader to open the federal government’s contracting process to broader public inspection. During my service in Indiana as governor from 2005 to 2013, we made similar changes as a part of wider ethics reforms.

But even water has a fatal dosage level. Too much exercise can be unhealthy. Attempts to eliminate almost all forms of confidential interaction in government come with downsides.

We’ve seen the unintended consequences of overzealous reform before. Badly needed civil service and procurement reforms initially worked, but they expanded over time until they paralyzed the federal government to a comical degree. Federal employees are in greater danger from a lightning strike than termination for lousy performance, and the procedures for buying, say, a new computer are so byzantine that the machines are outdated by the time they arrive.

The current obsession with transparency is starting to take a similar toll. In a host of ways, government has been rendered less nimble, less talented and less effective.

Honest people are now compelled to become scofflaws in the good-faith pursuit of their duties. Under “open meeting” requirements forbidding members of governing bodies to confer privately, the result is furtive hallway conversations or “executive committee” meetings where the discussion might not technically fall into the category of exemptions that permit such meetings.

Open-records laws have had the same effect. Government took a serious wrong turn at the dawn of the email era when somebody decided that these online exchanges are “documents.” Every emaiiler knows that, perhaps apart from attachments, they are conversations.

See next page
I’m rarely on a conference call with other public university presidents that doesn’t include someone reminding the group: “No emails!” Even the most deliberative of discussions is vulnerable to later being spread across a newspaper front page.

In sarcastic moments, I sometimes point out the gaping loophole in our public-records laws: Public officials are talking on the phone, and we don’t know what they’re saying! Clearly, we need a wiretap on every government line and, while we’re at it, their home and cellphones. And we’ll need surveillance cameras because, next thing you know, they’ll switch to speaking in person!

Overall capability in government suffers, too. The excessive background checks and disclosure demands of today’s federal employment discourage countless talented people from serving. I watched the number and quality of aspirants to Indiana state judgeships decline over the years. Like many other states, Indiana requires the immediate public identification of interested judicial candidates, and far too many outstanding lawyers, worried about angering their law firms, clients or employers, stay on the sidelines.

Maybe the worst net negative effect of the openness obsession is on the spirit of compromise — a spirit that is prized, ironically, by many transparency advocates. There is a reason the Constitutional Convention of 1787 was held privately and no official minutes were kept. Men who argued fiercely against certain provisions preserved their ability to accept second-best outcomes, and to go home and advocate ratification of the overall agreement.

None of this is to suggest a major rollback; we are better off for the sunshine. But for the best of reasons, “transparency” has risen to sacred status, and even moderate change will be difficult. A news media accustomed to rummaging through email records and visitor logs may be especially unsympathetic. Still, it’s time for us all to consider broadening the definitions of what communications should remain confidential and to grant more leeway for the kinds of meetings that are often essential to producing workable compromises.

I hope I’ve made myself... clear.