

## “What Do You Do Every Day?”

I’m often asked about the ‘Office of Probate Judge.’ What are the duties and responsibilities? How long is the term of service? Even our children have asked me those questions. This will hopefully provide some new insight and a better understanding of the Henry County Probate Court and the Henry County Commission.

Probate Judges are elected officials who deal with multiple areas of county government. They and their staff are involved with a number of important issues and concerns that are personal to the citizens of Henry County – issues including the probate of wills, administration of estates, appointment of guardians and conservators, involuntary mental commitments and many other areas of law that affect the daily lives of citizens in Henry County and beyond. The Henry County Probate Court is open to all residents regardless of age, gender, race, or social or economic status.

The Henry County Probate Judge is elected by voters throughout the county to a term of six years. They run at large - not from a particular district. In Henry County, the Probate Judge also serves as the Chairman of the Henry County Commission. In fact, Henry County is one of only about a dozen counties structured so that the Probate Judge chairs the County Commission. By virtue of the office, the Henry County Probate Judge also serves as an ex-officio member on numerous boards and agencies within Henry County and throughout south Alabama. Probate Judges are the custodians of all county funds, buildings, and inventories. Under Alabama law, they are the chief election officials for the county and, along with the Circuit Clerk and the Sheriff, comprise the three-person committee charged with overseeing all elections. They are held to the high standard of conducting elections that are run with transparency, accuracy and integrity. The Probate Judge is responsible for certifying all candidates to be placed on the ballot. His office orders needed election supplies and prepares a list of all registered voters. They get voting machines ready for the election. The Probate Judge must canvas and tabulate vote totals and certify the election results with the Alabama Secretary of State.

Probate Judges, like all governmental leaders, are charged with the responsibility of implementing sound financial management and accounting controls over the monies collected. They collect fees for various licenses, recording documents, mortgage tax, deed tax, casual sales tax, and other miscellaneous items. All funds collected by the Probate Judge are required to be disbursed to the designated agencies on a monthly basis. These include state, county and city offices as well as schools, fire departments, the Henry County Health Care Authority, marine police division, conservation, etc.

The Henry County Probate Judge presides over all probate court hearings which include the probate of wills, administrations, conservatorships, guardianships, adoptions, legitimations, name changes, mental commitment hearings and condemnation proceedings. The Probate Judge is also required to preserve all documents, files, papers, and orders, together with all attachments required by law, to be recorded and filed in their office. These documents become permanent records of the office. The following are recorded in the recording division of the probate office: plats, maps, judgments, liens, deeds, mortgages, corporations, lis pendens, marriage licenses, and military discharges. The recording of these documents is the only probate service still located on the ground floor of the Henry County Courthouse at 101 Court Square in Abbeville.

The probate office is also responsible for assessing and collecting ad valorem taxes and issuing plates for motor vehicles, trucks, trailers, motorcycles, ambulances, etc. We have over one hundred fifty different types of tags. We sell hunting, fishing, and boat licenses, temporary tags, replacement tags, and handicap tags and decals. This office issues driver’s licenses and state and county business licenses.

The Henry County Probate and County Commission offices are audited by the Alabama State Department of Examiners on an annual basis. The Probate Judge is accountable for all funds collected and is required to abide by the laws of the State of Alabama and the Alabama Ethics Commission pertaining to all functions in the office.

In 2022, our probate and county commission offices moved across the street to the Herndon Building at 102 North Court Square. This was made possible by the generous charitable donation from David and Maribeth Herndon. All probate transactions other than recording are now done in the Herndon Building.

My term of service ends in January, 2025. It has been an honor to serve the citizens of Henry County and the Wiregrass region since January 15, 2013. Never hesitate to contact me if I may be of service in any way (probate office – 334-585-3257 or commission office – 334-585-3708.) Thank you. (Micah 6:8)

### **30 Day Review:**

- Probate activity for February: four wills probated, four administrations, seven miscellaneous hearings, eleven guardianships, two involuntary mental commitments, one name change and eight marriage certificates recorded.
- If your last name begins with 'F', 'G' or 'N', April is the month to renew your tags.
- March 10 – Abbeville Methodist's annual dinner/auction missions auction – Belize, Costa Rica, Red Bird, Boys and Girls Club and others. \$35,000+ raised. Thanks to all.
- March 16 – HCYLP 'Local Industries Day'
- March 16 – March Administrative meeting in the Herndon Building
- March 20 – Ronnie and I met with Senator Tuberville's field rep
- March 21 – March Commission meeting in the Annex
- March 22 – E911 board meeting
- March 23 – 'Leadership Alabama' regional council meeting (virtual)
- March 23 – Henry County Youth Leadership Program board meeting
- March 24 – met with leadership of Sardis Baptist Church to discuss possibility of it becoming the voting location for the Lawrenceville precinct
- March 27 – Henry County Health and Rehab board meeting
- March 31 – Wiregrass Forum breakfast meeting – Ozark
- April 5/7 – ALEA will be here to move driver's license issuance to the Herndon Building

### **Dates to Remember:**

- April 7 – Good Friday Holiday – all Henry County government offices will be closed
- April 10 – driver's licenses will move from the courthouse to the Herndon Building
- April 13 – April Administrative meeting – The Herndon Building – 10:00 AM
- April 17-19 – APJA Spring Conference – Tuscaloosa (I will not attend)
- April 18 – Dothan Area Prayer Breakfast – Dothan Civic Center – 7:30 (John Riley)
- April 18 – April Commission meeting – Annex Courtroom – 10:00 AM
- April 18 – Jimmy Rane Induction - Dothan Business Hall of Fame – Calvary (Dothan)
- April 18-20 – Final week of Chris Champion's tenure as N.A.C.E president
- April 20 – Abbeville Library Foundation board meeting – 3:30
- April 21 – Sam Clenney Retirement Reception – Henry County Courthouse – 1:30/3:30
- April 26 – ACCA board meeting – Montgomery
- April 28 – Student Government Day for selected Henry County high school juniors
- May 4 – speaker: National Day of Prayer breakfast – Ozark First Baptist Church