

“The Cost of One Vote”

I think it's clear to most of us that federal dollars have been flowing at a record pace during the past three years. It began during the onset of COVID but continued long afterward. The Alabama legislature managed those dollars well by meeting many needs and putting money into the 'rainy day' fund. I commend them for their actions. It's also clear that the 'glory days' of extra cash in county coffers have taken a turn – due in large measure to an ever-growing national debt and the resulting inflation. I hear it every time Karen goes to the grocery door or visits the gas station...we see it every time we go out to eat. We've reached the time to watch the budgets even more closely – family and government. Henry County leaders will soon begin work on our 2024-2025 fiscal year budgets. We will stress that our department heads concentrate on 'needs' and cut back on 'wants'. I'm hopeful that state and federal budget planners will do the same.

As this is being written (on Monday, May 6), the Alabama Senate has made no final decision regarding a second vote on the conference committee's report on pending gambling legislation. HB151 states that the vote on this particular bill will be taken in a special election to be held on August 20th. It should be noted that the general election is set for November 5 – eleven weeks later. I'm told that a special election could cost in the range of \$4M. While this bill easily passed in the House (72 to 29), it met a different fate in the Senate. Alabama law states that any legislation leading to a constitutional amendment requires a 3/5 affirmative vote – that would mean 21 of the 35 senators would have to vote in favor of the bill. In the senate vote taken last week, the tally was 20 to 15 in favor of passage – one vote short of the 21 votes needed. The senate does have the option of bringing the bill back up for a second vote but must do so in one of the three legislative days remaining in the session. My guess is there will be some strong negotiations taking place over the weekend and it won't be brought up for a second vote unless they are sure they have the 21 votes – meaning one senator must be persuaded to change his or her vote from 'no' to 'yes'. Regardless of any personal feelings I have about gambling or any issue, I'm always supportive of allowing Alabama citizens the opportunity to vote. That's one of the things fought for by the soldiers whose names are etched on the newly installed memorial monuments in the Henry County Veterans Park. The question of 'if' and 'when' we will vote rests in the hands (and on the voting machines) of our 35 Alabama state senators. My concern is not 'if' we vote but 'when' we vote. Is one vote taken 77 days early worth four million dollars to Alabama tax payers? Let's think about it.

(NOTE: This column was written before the senate re-convened on May 7th. It was inadvertently omitted from 'The Abbeville Herald's' May 9th edition. The Alabama Senate did not call it up for a second vote before the session ended on May 9th, meaning there will be no 'special election' needed. For this, I am grateful. David Money)

30 Day Review:

- April 8 – Five Star Credit Union ribbon cutting
- April 9 – Henry County/ACCA Legislative Advocacy Day – Montgomery
- April 11 – Wallace College Foundation Board Joint Meet & Greet – Abbeville
- April 17 – Henry County Youth Leadership ‘Government Day – The Capitol
- April 18 – April commission meetings
- April 18 – Child Advocacy Program’s 30th Anniversary Banquet – Dothan
- April 19 – The Katie Britt Briefing (Dana McCain) – Calvary Baptist – Dothan
- April 23 – HCEDA Stakeholder’s Appreciation Event – GSWCC
- April 24 – Henry County Student Government Day – Courthouse & Herndon Building
- April 26 – Wiregrass Forum breakfast – Ozark
- April 26 – Wallace College Education Society Brunch – Dothan Country Club
- April 29 – E911 board meeting – Herndon Building
- May 1 – Participated in the HES 9th Grade Academy mock interview session
- May 3 – HCEDA quarterly board meeting – GSWCC Annex
- May 6 – Wiregrass Innovation Center Groundbreaking – Dothan
- May 8 – Wallace College graduation ceremony

Dates to Remember:

- May 10 – WTVY Hometown Tour – Downtown Abbeville
- May 13/14 – Alabama Probate Judges Conference – Tuscaloosa (not attending)
- May 15 – STEM Ecosystem Kick-Off – The ATTA
- May 16 – May Administrative meeting – 9:00 – Herndon Building
- May 16 – May Commission meeting – 11:00 – Annex Building
- May 16/17 – Jimmy Rane Foundation Scholarship Event – Montgomery & Prattville
- May 20 – Henry County Health and Rehab board meeting – HCHR
- May 24 – Wiregrass Forum breakfast – Ozark
- May 27 – Memorial Day holiday
- June 4 – Wallace Foundation board meeting – Wallace College