



THE VOICE OF ALABAMA

ALABAMA CITIZENS FOR
CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

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We don't break for reform!

Best time for advocacy is between legislative sessions

By Cary Page
ACCR Legislative Liaison

After the summer vacations, the family reunions and the holidays at the beach, the world returns to its usual pace when the school bell rings. However in the world of advocacy the effort to reform the 1901 Constitution does not stand still. It is during these times that legislators are most receptive and willing to learn about our issue: allowing the people to decide on calling a convention to re-write the 1901 Constitution. **If you have not spoken with your senator or representative since the session ended in June, take the time now to let your voice be heard. Even if you have contacted him or her earlier, do it again.**

Speaker Pro Tem Demetrius Newton and Senator Ted Little both intend to re-introduce bills in the 2008 session to "Let the People Vote." The bills as written last year are under review regarding several provisions such as: leadership in the convention, the convention's time frame and financing of the delegates' campaigns. We would be interested in your opinions on these issues and encourage you to contact ACCR or call and speak with your local fellow ACCR members.

The Legislature and members are in the news and the events are important to follow as we prepare for the 2008 session.

Legislative Watch

Recent changes include the appointment

of Randy Hinshaw (D-Madison) to the Rules Committee. Unfortunately, Hinshaw resigned as Chair of the House Constitution and Elections Committee which was the committee that considered the "Let the People Vote" legislation. Watch for the Speaker's appointment of a new chair because it will be important to the movement. Other changes in leadership and committee membership can be expected.

Action

Junior College Chancellor Bradley Byrne resigned his District 32 Senate seat in June. He was a strong supporter of this movement and was Co-Sponsor of the Legislation in this last Session. A special election is underway with a general Election October 16 in the Baldwin County area. Where do the candidates stand on the issue to "Let the People Vote" on calling a constitutional convention? Ask them and express your view.

Municipal Elections for mayors and council members and other local elections are on-going around the state during the fall. Raise your voice and ask for their support to allow the people to vote.

Special Session?

The question of whether there will be a special legislative session this fall may be resolved by the time you read this newsletter. If the Governor calls a special session, it is doubtful that the con-

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HEY, Y'ALL: PLEASE SIGN UP!

With our low membership fees of \$15, we cannot send the VOICE via snail mail. For direct web delivery, please see "e-newsletter sign-up" at www.constitutionalreform.org.

JOIN ACCR TODAY!



First Annual Bailey Thomson Awards Luncheon

Reformers celebrate leaders Corts, Lehe, GBM

By Todd Keith

"The Deep South and my home state have come a mighty long way in the last 50 years and still have a long way to go. But please, don't be discouraged by the journey." ~ Cynthia Tucker, Alabama native and editorial page editor, Atlanta Journal-Constitution

It was the best of constitutions; it was the worst of constitutions. Mark Twain didn't say that, though if he were alive today you could safely wager the humorist would have plenty of fecund material in Alabama's 1901 Constitution. In fact, any modern

satirist would have difficulty creating a document so plainly, so awkwardly, and so tragically out of step with modern American ideals of justice, equality, and democracy.

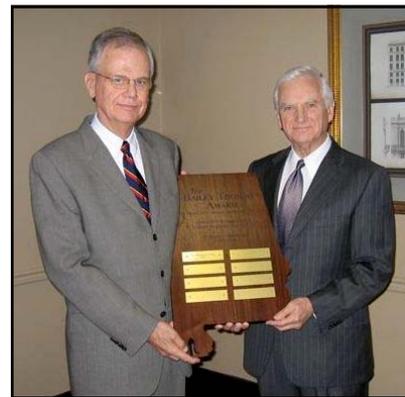
On August 30, an estimated 400 attendees from

across the state gathered in Birmingham for the first annual Bailey Thomson Awards Luncheon to celebrate the progress of the people who want a better state Constitution and to honor the life of Thompson, a journalism professor at the University of Alabama and former *Mobile Press-Register's* editorial page editor, who died in 2003 of a heart attack at the age of 54.

It was appropriate that Dr. James Nash, ACCR Foundation Board

Chair, gave the invocation to begin the day's activities. Before thanking the Lord for the food and good company, Nash asked for assistance with what everyone had gathered for—to move forward the cause of constitutional reform. It signified that though everyone was grateful for the many blessings bestowed, those in attendance realize that there was still much work to be done.

The Bailey Thomson Awards program included a keynote speech by Cynthia Tucker, an Alabama native and editorial page editor of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. "Indeed, Bailey was one of those who made me proud to be from Alabama," she remarked. Quoting Thomson's famous op-ed when he called the constitution a "legal abomination," Tucker said, "I wish I had written that." It raises a fair question: Who among Alabama's representatives and senators would conceivably stand up today and say the same of the state's



Dr. Jim Nash, left, with Dr. Thomas Corts

ruling legal document? "The Deep South and my home state have come a mighty long way in the last 50 years and still have a long way to go. But please, don't be discouraged by the journey."

Following Tucker's remarks, Governor Albert Brewer presented the first Bailey Thomson Award to former Samford University President Dr. Thomas Corts whose pivotal speech in 2000 to the Rotary Club of



Cynthia Tucker

The Bailey Thomson Awards in brief

The **Bailey Thomson Award** was presented by Governor Albert Brewer to **Dr. Thomas E. Corts** for his early leadership and continued support of the ACCR Foundation.

Sandra Behel presented the **Constitutional Reform Citizen Educator of the Year Award** to **Lewis Lehe** for his initiative in creating the *It's a Thick Book* video.

Ann Florie gave the **Constitutional Reform Partner of the Year Award** to **Greater Birmingham Ministries** for its education campaign involving people of faith and low income communities on the issues of constitution reform.

"If Moses can tell Pharaoh, 'let my people go,' surely we can tell the Legislature, 'let the people vote.'" Remarks from **Scott Douglas**, Executive Director of Greater Birmingham Ministries as he accepted the Constitutional Reform Partner of the Year award.



Birmingham expressed how crippling the state's constitution was for Alabama. Following that speech, Corts and Thomson went on to found the ACCR Foundation. Seven years later, Dr. Corts shared with the hundreds of CR advocates gathered that he sees progress and encouraged people to keep walking down the path to Alabama's seventh Constitution.

"I didn't learn any of this when I was young," said Teresa Boody, a Latin teacher at Oak Mountain High School who attended the luncheon and a gathering afterwards to discuss ways advocates of reform can become more involved. "But the more I learn about our Constitution, the angrier I get. There are so many people who know what the Constitution is all about but are willing to keep quiet."

After taking her students to visit the state capital during a hearing held about the Constitution, Boody and her class saw first hand how misguided yet pervasive many of arguments against changing this flawed document have become. "This one poor woman got up and said how, 'If we change the Constitution, they're going to take God out of it,'" Boody remarked. "I don't know if the talk shows got to her or not, but it was sad."

In attendance at the hour-long meeting were individuals from places like Mobile, Birmingham, Tuscaloosa, Florence and Huntsville, in addition to Blountsville, Demopolis, Rainsville, Livingston and Lowndesboro. It was a great representation of people wanting to learn more about how they can spread the word about the need for constitu-

tional reform. After the luncheon, 45 attendees stayed for an interactive brainstorming session facilitated by Mark Berte, the ACCR Foundation Grassroots Education Director. Several excellent ideas for furthering the cause of reform were generated in that discussion.

It's not yet clear if among those attending the day's activities there was a new Mark Twain, humorist, or editorial page editor who can communicate to Alabama's citizens just how tragically bad the current constitution is. But until this "worst of documents" is replaced with a new, fair, and balanced one, the joke is clearly on us.



Gulfcoast reformers unite for food and song

Reform activists and supporters in the Gulfcoast Region (Mobile/Baldwin/Escambia Counties) gathered in late May at Meaher State Park to celebrate last spring's legislative progress. **Lisa Thomas**, ARISE activist and ACCR supporter, catered a picnic lunch to 48 attendees. Mobile ACCR chapter president **Merceria Ludgood** emceed (shown above), as **Linda Ingram**, Mobile ACCR, and **Pat Siano**, ACCR Foundation board member, handed out awards. Daphne ACCR activist **Ardis Fine** added a touch of culture by providing new lyrics to an old favorite, "She'll Be Comin' Round the Mountain":

It is time to rewrite Nineteen Oh One (Yes, it is!)
It is time to rewrite Nineteen Oh One (Yes, it is!)
New amendments every day
No that just is not the way
It is time to rewrite Nineteen Oh One (Yes, it is!)

Gonna write and call our leaders til it's done (Yes, we are!)
Gonna write and call our leaders til it's done (Yes, we are!)
If we all can come together
We will make our great state better
Gonna write and call our leaders til it's done (Yes, we are!)

Sick and tired of back door dealings (Yes, it's true!)
Sick and tired of back door dealings (Yes, it's true!)
They can bluster, blunder, blather
But they will ne're defeat us
Sick and tired of back door dealings (Yes, it's true!)

There's a new day round the corner this we know (Yes, we know!)
There's a new day round the corner this we know (Yes, we know!)
Tell your brothers and your sisters
That ACCR will triumph
There's a new day round the corner this we know (Yes, we know!)



REPEAT FIRST VERSE



Why don't party leaders trust the people?

Alabamians in convention will affirm our best rights, values

By Charlotte Ward

On the "For the Record" aired August 31, three young journalists expressed the opinion that Alabama would not get a new constitution in their lifetime because "Alabamians don't like change." However, Alabama is changing, and a growing number of Alabamians are coming to realize that the 1901 Constitution is a fundamentally-flawed document keeping us from making the changes we need to make to have a better place to work and live.

Not only journalists but also political leaders tend to sell Alabamians short when it comes to trusting us, the people, to make wise decisions about our future. For example, the Democratic and Republican party chairmen recently wrote articles in the Auburn-Opelika Newspaper regarding the different approaches to reform the 1901 Alabama Constitution: by continuing to amend it or by holding a citizens convention. While those paths of reform are the only two ways allowed by our current Constitution, there are assertions made by both individuals which need to be addressed.

First, Mike Hubbard is mistaken when he says that a constitutional convention would raise taxes, legalize casinos, and remove our protections because the people of this great state would never vote to ratify such a document. Also, his statement fearing a special interests domination of a convention rings hollow since that is what currently happens in the legislature.

As for Joe Turnham's remarks in favor of a citizen's convention ap-

proach, it rings hollow too. The Democrats have held the positions of power in the legislature for decades, but they have yet to allow the citizens of Alabama the opportunity to hold a citizens convention. Also, he fails to mention that there was Republican support for the citizen's convention bills this year in both the Senate and House committees.

We are not proposing to throw the baby out with the bathwater. We are just asking for a new tub

In addition, neither person pointed out that polls show a majority of Republican and Democratic voters in Alabama are in favor of a citizen's convention to write our next constitution or the fact that the legislation this year had more co-sponsors from both parties than it ever has had before. Nor did they mention that the 1901 Constitution is Alabama's sixth one and that holding our next constitutional convention would be the first time in our state's history that women

would have a seat at the table to write our state's social contract.

A new Constitution would not contain the racist history and language of the 1901 Constitution, nor the ability to tax families further into poverty, nor set up a power structure where local matters have to be decided by the politicians and special interests in Montgomery. Alabama's next Constitution will retain the preamble and the protection of rights that we hold so dear.

The advocates of the citizen's convention approach are not proposing to throw the baby out with the bathwater. We are just asking to get a new tub which has not been patched almost 800 times at the tax payer's expense.

Today there are men and women of every race and class who have the education, experience and wisdom to gather and write the Constitution we need for a new day in Alabama. Let's trust the people with the opportunity to see what a constitution convention can produce.

Charlotte Ward, who lives in Auburn, is a Board member of the ACCR Foundation.

We need advocacy year-round

Continued from page 1

vention bill would be considered. But matters of good government, ethics reform and campaign finance reform have been mentioned. All are part of the reform movement and are much needed.

Over the next months, leading up to the 2008 session beginning February 5, 2008, activities to raise

visibility for a constitutional convention to re-write the 1901 Alabama Constitution are needed around the state.

Advocacy is not critical only during the Session, but is needed year-round. It must be carried out throughout the state and communicated to your representatives and senators.



Nov. 11: Please use infamous date to raise funds

Please consider hosting an ACCR Foundation fundraising event in your community before November 11, which is the day the citizens of Alabama supposedly “ratified” the 1901 Constitution. Already, we have two such local events scheduled, and need your help with promoting them and with planning others (such as pancake

breakfasts, house parties, or other creative gatherings) in your area.

The two events we already have planned are Kate Campbell benefit concerts which will take place on the following dates and locations:

- November 6th – Dauphin Way United Methodist Church – Mobile – 7:00 pm

- November 8th – Grace Episcopal Church – Sheffield – 7:00 pm

If you would like to become involved with either of those events or help with other awareness/fundraising activities, please contact our Grass-roots Education Director, Mark Berte: 205-266-3371 or Mark@constitutionalALreform.org.

Nov. 17: Constitution Convention Coalition summit

- Who: Constitution Convention Coalition
- What: 2007 Summit
- Where: Location To Be Determined
- When: Saturday, November 17, 9 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

On Saturday, November 17, the Constitution Convention Coalition will have a summit meeting to continue planning for 2008. The Coali-

tion is made up of over 30 non-profit organizations from across Alabama who are dedicated to Constitutional Reform. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend this exciting event that will include roundtable discussions and planning sessions on topics like Advocacy Education for 501(c)(3) Organizations; Constitutional Reform Background Training and Talking Points; How to Find Your Organization’s Niche in the Constitu-

tional Reform Movement; College and University Idea Sharing; and How to Host House Parties.

Please check the website at www.constitutionALreform.org or contact Brantley Fry for more information:

Brantley@constitutionALreform.org or (205) 967-2621.

ACCR Foundation welcomes two new staff members

The ACCR Foundation Board of Directors is delighted to announce that we have two new employees. Jasmine Hodges started work on September 1 as the new ACCR Foundation Coordinator. Growing up in Thomasville and completing her education at Birmingham-Southern College and the University of Alabama, Jasmine is committed to the state and is very pleased to join the Constitutional Reform movement. Jasmine holds bachelor's degrees in Spanish and English and a master's degree in English; she brings excellent writing skills, a range of teaching abilities, and non-profit experience to the position. Please let Jasmine know that you are glad she

is on board and how you can help share your gifts:

jasmine@constitutionALreform.org or (205) 441-6805.

As we welcome Jasmine, we also want to give our appreciation to Katrina Brown who had to step down from that position because of personal reasons. The ACCR Foundation is glad to report that Katrina will continue to share her time as a volunteer for the cause.

Tiqua Gator, who was born and raised in Jasper, was hired as the Walker County Education Coordinator. She graduated from Walker High School and later received a B.S. degree in Marketing from Alabama A & M University. Currently working

at Beville State Community College, Tiqua is an advocate for community involvement and has held several leadership roles in the Walker County area. This background makes her a great fit to assist the Foundation with implementing its grant from the Walker Area Community Foundation. Tiqua explains that she is “excited to work for an organization and dedicated to educating Alabamians on the issues that affect our everyday lives.” To help out with CR education efforts in Walker County, contact Tiqua:

Tiqua@constitutionALreform.org or (205) 835-2317.



FROM THE ACCR, INC., CO-CHAIR

Dear ACCR Members, Supporters and Friends,

Because of your continued hard work and devotion, the State of Alabama is closer than ever to a new Constitution! ACCR began as a group of seven supporters in 2000; has over 5,000 now; and presented 70,000+ signatures on petitions to the Legislature in 2006 supporting legislation to "Let the People Vote" for a Constitution Convention.

Let the People Vote legislation in 2007 passed the House and Senate Committees and made it to the House floor, but failed in the Legislative Session, as did two bills that would have provided for an article-by-article change. It is up to us, the members of ACCR, to continue to push for a Constitution Convention for real change. Statewide polls show that the majority of Alabama voters would vote for a Constitution Convention if given the opportunity.

YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT IS CRITICAL NOW AND IN 2008. Here's what you can do:

- Read our quarterly newsletters on ACCR's website under "WHAT'S NEW" and submit information for publication.
- **Reserve Saturday, November 17 on your calendar to attend the Constitutional Convention Coalition Summit, with location and details to follow.**
- Ask your state legislator to vote for Bills in the 2008 Legislative Session to Let the People Vote for a Constitution Convention.
- Arrange a community viewing of "It's a Thick Book" to educate your neighbors of the problems with the 1901 Constitution and ACCR's efforts.

ACCR, Inc. is an all-volunteer, non-partisan, grassroots advocacy organization that *does not have paid lobbyists or paid staff*. **Your help is needed now more than ever as we continue our progress. Please renew your membership today** by returning this form or via the website: www.constitutionalreform.org. The annual membership dues and additional donations are used to keep concerned Alabamians informed; to maintain the ACCR website, database and cell phone; and to mail information to members and supporters who do not have Internet access.

On behalf of the Board of ACCR, Inc., I would like to thank you for all you do. Together we will bring a new Constitution to Alabama!

Lenora

Lenora Pate, Co-Chair, ACCR, Inc.

T: (205) 930-5162

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___ \$15 Individual ___ \$25 Family ___ \$50 Sponsor ___ \$100 Benefactor ___ \$500 Reformer
 Gift membership for a friend \$_____ Please include their name(s) and contact information

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ALABAMA CITIZENS FOR
CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

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ACCR is a public interest group dedicated to helping Alabamians draft a new state constitution.

ACCR Foundation, Inc., grew out of a rally in Tuscaloosa on April 7, 2000, as part of a grass-roots movement for civic renewal and constitutional revision.

ACCR represents members across Alabama who believe in the power of citizens to create a better future for themselves and their state.

We are devoted to the idea that people deserve the best government they can design. Our mission is civic, rather than partisan. We seek to engage Alabamians in serious discussion about the future of our state.

We want a state constitution that unites, rather than divides our people. We want to create a civic atmosphere in which politics can function for the benefit of all citizens, rather than for a few powerful interests.

Our movement begins with the citizen, who holds the highest office in our democracy.

ACCR is about people's willingness to take control of their civic destiny and achieve the promise that our nation's founders held up for the world to admire and follow.

Helpful tips to soothe fears about a new constitution

If you encounter a person who expresses **fear** about a convention writing a constitution that does things like removes God, legalizes casinos or raise taxes, please let them know that we, the people of Alabama, would never ratify a new constitution if those changes were proposed.

If someone says they **fear** that special interests will dominate a constitution convention, ask them if they think that special interests currently dominate the legislature. Then let them know that there are strong protections in the convention legislation (shown on our web site www.constitutionalreform.org) such as residency requirements for delegates, campaign contribution restrictions limiting donations (including in-kind) to \$100, and no "after election" contributions. Also, lobbyists are prohibited from giving *anything* to delegates—which is *much* stronger than is permitted today (up to \$250.00 per politician per day without having to report one penny of it).

Alabamians should not **fear** a new constitution! Alabamians have written **SIX** constitutions before and can do it again!