



THE VOICE OF ALABAMA

ALABAMA CITIZENS FOR
CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

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Constitution convention set to convene in 2009!

Now that we have your attention, let us explain.

A real constitution convention will only be possible if the state legislature gives Alabama citizens the permission to vote to hold one. However, the above headline is still accurate because the Alabama Citizens for Constitutional Reform Foundation Board of Directors recently decided to move forward with convening a mock convention in 2009.

The purpose of the simulated constitutional convention is to educate Alabama's people about the convention process. It will also help address some of the fears being spread about holding a constitution convention and the document that a convention might write. The ACCR Foundation contends that whatever social contract a constitution convention—*real or simulated*—produces, it will be a tremendous improvement over Alabama's current constitution.

Delegates selected in 2008

The general concept for the mock convention is as follows: During the summer and fall of 2008, two people from each of the state's 105 house legislative districts will help select at least one convention delegate from their district. All representatives to the simulated convention will be selected by December 31, 2008. The mock convention will convene its first session over a long weekend in January, 2009, and following that gathering conduct additional work via email and tele-

conference. Depending on funding, the mock convention will assemble one more time—most likely in April to coincide with the date in 1901 when voters approved the call for the 1901 convention. The final product of the mock convention will be unveiled at the Constitution Village in conjunction with the third annual Bailey Thomson Awards Luncheon, which will also take place in Huntsville that year.

Education contest to engage seniors

The ACCR Foundation also plans to work with partners throughout the state to launch a second education initiative to focus on Alabama's high school seniors. As Lewis Lehe demonstrated in the creation of the outstanding *It's a Thick Book* documentary, young Alabamians are both passionate about important issues and innovative in how they approach them.

A High School Constitutional Reform Education Contest will give students an opportunity to creatively express themselves and, in the process, learn more about the impacts of the 1901 Constitution. The added benefit of this contest is that we will be able to further encourage people to watch the *It's a Thick Book* documentary.

The contest will be promoted in the early part of 2008 with final submissions due by mid-March. Students will

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HOLIDAY GIFT IDEA!

Searching for a meaningful gift this holiday season? Consider making a **tax-deductible contribution** to the ACCR Foundation in someone's honor. That person will receive a special card announcing that you made a donation. This gift will keep giving long after the holidays are over, ensuring a more just Alabama for generations to come. To make your gift or end of the year donation, mail a check to the ACCR Foundation or use our secure donation page on our web site:

www.constitutionALreform.org



Constitution chokes hometown democracy

Compiled by Nancy Ekberg
 ACCR, Inc., Board

Want to invest in your own schools? Good luck! Three years ago, the citizens of Trussville wanted to increase their local property taxes in order to improve their education system. To do this, they had to go to the Alabama Legislature to ask for a constitutional amendment. However, the 1901 Constitution allows the rest of the State have a say on these local matters! 68% of the people who actually live in Trussville voted in favor of the increase, but the measure did not pass because 55% of the state voted "NO"—in effect saying that they know better what the local needs are.



Prichard's Trade Zone. The City of Prichard, which is in Mobile County, had to go to the legislature three times in their effort to establish an Alabama Foreign Trade Investment Zone. The measure to establish that economic development tool first appeared on the ballots in 2004 and even though the City of Prichard voters were in favor of it, it did not pass because the other voters in Mobile County turned it down. So Prichard had to go to the legislature again. In 2006, just one state senator voted against the bill, which meant that the local measure went for a statewide vote in 2006. Mobile County supported the measure by 59%, but enough of the state voted against the measure that it failed. Since the "NO" vote was less than one half of one percent of the total vote, the state's automatic recount law was triggered and our taxpayer money was spent recounting all of those statewide ballots to confirm that the local amendment did not pass. The measure was finally approved by local voters in 2007.

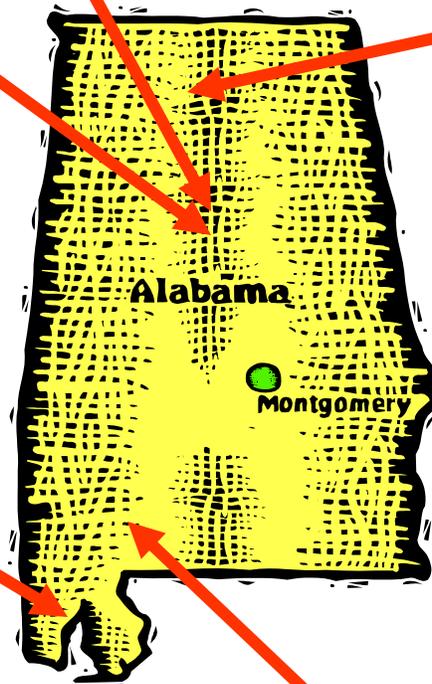


At least hogs have rights! Argo residents who lived in a development were alarmed when a large hog farm business decided to buy land and operate the farm adjacent to the development. But because the area was unincorporated, the people had no right of zoning. They appealed to their local St. Clair County commission, but the county also has no zoning rights, so the people and democracy lost, and the hog farm won.



cambia County and do not have home rule, which means they do not have zoning rights to prevent the plant from being established in their neighborhood. Residents are trying to pressure the company to decide against choosing their community for the plant.

Here's a neat idea: Let's blast near a nuclear plant. Rogers Group, Inc, wants to move its 200-acre quarry from a present location in Crosskey to another location near Tanner in Limestone County. Problem is, the citizens fear that the explosions necessary in quarry work will endanger the Brown's Ferry Nuclear Plant located nearby. Residents also fear that the dust, traffic and activity will lower the value of their homes and create health problems. But the residents lose because their county does not have home rule and cannot zone against the move. Citizens have taken their worries to the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and are waiting for some help. One local woman is willing to take the company to court because her grandson has asthma and would be in serious danger from the dust. To stop this from happening, the legislature needs to be in session and have both chambers approve a bill to protect local residents. The measure would then need to be approved by just Limestone County voters unless there was one or more legislator who voted against the bill which means that the rest of the state would have a say in this local matter.



Freemanville lacks the freedom to decide. A chemical company called C&S Chemical Inc, wants to build a factory that would manufacture aluminum sulfate. The produce has several industrial uses but it is considered a hazardous material. The people who live in Freemanville, the community where C&S Chemical wants to locate its plant, fear that the truck traffic and the chemical will be a problem. But the residents live in an unincorporated area of Es-



The 1901 Constitution impacts local communities every day. Please share your stories with us:

(205) 540-7501

OR

Nanekberg@aol.com



Statewide special events build support for reform

Recent events throughout Alabama have continued to focus on the need for a new constitution. Above, Scottsboro High School students gathered to see *It's a Thick Book*. At top, a *Thick Book* showing took place in Jasper as a part of the Walker Area Community Foundation grant. Above right, singer Kate Campbell performed in the Shoals, and at right some of the organizers gather for the Campbell concert in Mobile.





Nonprofits build reform voice at Coalition summit

By Hill Carmichael
CR Education Campaign
Greater Birmingham Ministries

Contrary to popular opinion, nonprofit organizations are far more than just charitable organizations. Apparently, the nonprofit sector packs quite the economic punch.

For evidence of this, just check out the latest study from the Nonprofit Resource Center of Alabama (NRCA) which reports that Alabama's 19,000 plus nonprofit organizations employ more people than the real estate, mining and utilities companies combined. That's right – COMBINED.

Another fact from the NRCA study: in 2006 - the nonprofit sector generated more than \$1.92 million in state and local tax revenue. That's no small change. These are some impressive figures, but I believe that there is more to these numbers than meets the eye.

These numbers confirm a fact which the nonprofit sector has been aware of for quite some time. Our work is serious business and if we can impact the economy, then we have the capacity to influence social, and, dare I say it, political change.

One way nonprofits are changing the way Alabama goes about its business, is through the Constitution Convention Coalition. What started in 2005 as a very loose coalition of 15 partner organizations has grown to include more than 30 Statewide Coalition Partners. These nonprofit organizations have recognized that

Questions focused on underlying questions that reformers are not facing

their missions have been hindered by the 1901 Constitution, and they are making plans and taking action for the sake of a better Alabama.

On Saturday, November 17, the Constitution Convention Coalition held its First Annual Summit at Birmingham-Southern College. Our Coalition Partner organizations sent representatives from all over the state to make plans for 2008, and beyond. Our goal was achieved with several wonderful ideas coming out of the Summit. Whether the participants were discussing education or advocacy, the Coalition's efforts or the College Council's plans, everyone was fully engaged and ready to take

action.

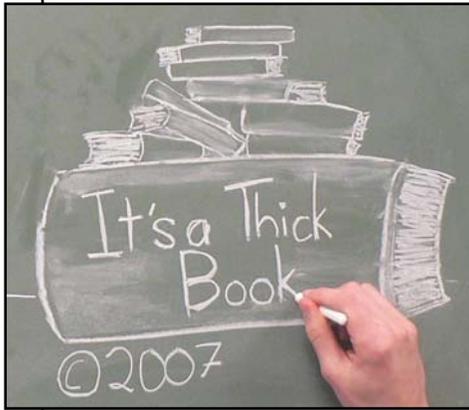
Participants received an update on Power Analysis which identified the persons and organizations that support reform and those that do not, as well as those who need to be convinced. Suzanne Martin facilitated the "Knowledge Cafe" which provided everyone an opportunity to share their ideas regarding the Constitutional Reform Movement. The questions during the "Knowledge Cafe" focused on support and opposition to reform, underlying questions that reformers are not facing and steps required to take the movement forward. Some very good ideas came out of the "Knowledge Cafe".

Attendees also discussed messages that could support "Let the People Vote" and "Alabama Needs a New Constitution" to help amplify the need for reform. Finally, attendees heard of communities that have been harmed by lack of home rule and were urged to add their own messages to the mix.

If you have any questions regarding the Constitution Convention Coalition or would like to join, please contact Brantley Fry, the Coalition Coordinator:
Brantley@constitutionALreform.org



Thick Book slims down to 27 minutes



The ACCR Foundation is delighted to announce the re-release of the new 27-minute version of the film *It's a Thick Book*. Thousands of

Alabamians have enjoyed this educational and entertaining documentary created by Lewis Lehe in its original 45-minute format. Now we have even more opportunities to share this important educational resource, as the new

streamlined version is perfect for sharing at meetings, conferences, and even Sunday school classes or Bible studies.

Because we believe *It's a Thick Book* is such a vital resource in constitutional reform education, we will continue to provide copies free of charge. However, we encourage people to make donations to help with the costs associated with this phenomenal education tool. To order a free copy of the 27-minute version, which has been added to the DVD with the 45-minute version, please visit our web site: www.constitutionALreform.org

New web site feature seeks bad examples

Starting in January, you can find on our web site accounts of the many ways in which Alabama's 1901 Constitution hamstring local governments, hinders economic development, erodes our education systems and otherwise negatively impacts our citizens.

Unfortunately, we already have several examples of the many victims of Alabama's 1901 Constitution. But we still need your help of finding local examples in your area. Please be on the

KNOW YOUR 1901 RIGHTS! Constitution locks in priorities for 21st Century

Amendment III, Section 256

"... nothing in this Constitution shall be construed as creating or recognizing any right to education or training at public expense."

Amendment 597

"All persons shall have the right to hunt and fish in this state in accordance with law and regulations."

Education contest to engage seniors

Continued from page 1

be asked to submit essays and/or multi-media based on a particular theme.

Depending on fundraising, the ACCR Foundation will offer first place and second place scholarship awards for the top two winners in both the essay and multi-media categories. In addition, we would like to provide awards to the schools where the overall winners are located and to give out small

prizes to local winners, again provided we find sponsors.

If you are willing to offer your time, expertise or financial support to either the Mock Convention Project or the High School CR Education Contest, please contact Mark Berte, the ACCR Foundation Grassroots Education Director: (205) 266-3371 or Mark@constitutionALreform.org

WARNING!



**Another
Victim of
Alabama's
1901
Constitution!**

lookout and let us know when you see the negative impacts of our current constitution when you read the newspaper, listen to the radio or watch TV. Please contact Jasmine Hodges, the ACCR Foundation Coordinator:

(205) 441-6805 or

jasmine@constitutionALreform.org



Thanks to all for your time and talents

The mission of the ACCR Foundation is to “**educate the people of Alabama about our 1901 Constitution and the need and opportunities to reform it.**” Earlier this year, the ACCR Foundation Board of Directors set the following three mission goals and two enabling goals for 2007:

Mission Goals—

1. Make constitutional reform education more engaging and accessible.
2. Enhance the effectiveness and reach of CR

messages and communications.

3. Collaborate with other groups educating Alabamians about the 1901 Constitution.

Enabling Goals—

1. Increase funding to support the work of the Foundation.
2. Strengthen the ACCR Foundation organization structure to support the above goals.

The ACCR Foundation would like

to take this opportunity to thank all of our volunteers, staff and contributors for making incredible progress this year in every one of the above goals. Without the support and dedication to the cause for so many individuals, organizations, corporations and foundations, the CR Movement would not have gained as much ground as it has this year. **When you make your plans and set your budgets for 2008 and beyond, please consider how you can further support the cause to write a better Alabama Constitution.**



SAME-OLD-STORY DEPARTMENT: From *Birmingham Age-Herald*, FEBRUARY 15, 1915

New Constitution Badly Needed, Thinks Weatherly

Heartily Indorses Idea of a Constitutional Convention

“I am strongly in favor of a constitutional convention to draft a new constitution in place of the present one, drafted in 1901, and in which I took a part as one of the delegates from this county,” said James Weatherly, [Birmingham] city commissioner, yesterday.

“I grant, however, that it may be wise to wait until after the recessed session of the legislature is over and the political pot has ceased to boil with such caloric energy. The convention, however, should be held, and the sooner it can be held, considering circumstances, the better.

“There are many reasons. The present constitution is a rural constitution. It contains no provisions for proper government of municipal bodies such as is Birmingham of the present day, because there was no city

like this when it was drafted and because the men who made it did not have municipal affairs property brought before them.

“The city must have more freedom to exercise powers of self-government.

“There must be a reform of court procedure, making it less complicated, more efficient and speedy, with a consolidation of many of the courts we now have.

“There must be a provision for local taxes for school purposes, setting each community free to tax itself what it pleases for its public schools.

“And there are still other matters which could be mentioned and which will be mentioned and which are of great importance. It would no doubt be wise to wait a reasonable time after the legislature adjourns in order

to allow the issues there fought out some little time to cool off and the political mind to regain its equilibrium, but within a few months after adjournment I think such a time would arrive and then no time should be lost in calling the convention.

“It seems impossible, although it might be ideal, to await a time when there would be no issues whatever before the public which might assume an undue influence over the deliberations of the body forming a new constitution. But there will always be such issues before a citizenship alive to its own interests and striving for self-development in governmental affairs, whether the issue be prohibition or something else; so I say we should have the convention and have it soon.”



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.

The 2008 Legislative Session will be the fifth time that the Alabama Legislature will have the opportunity during this millennium to pass legislation to Let the People Vote for a Constitution Convention. Sponsors, House Speaker Pro Tem Demetrius Newton and Senator Ted Little, have confirmed that they will again sponsor legislation in 2008 to Let the People Vote!

The 2008 Bill will again allow the people to vote three times:

1. To decide if they wish to hold a Convention.
2. If yes, to vote for Convention delegates from each of the House Legislative Districts.
3. To vote on the final product developed by the Convention – a new Constitution for Alabama!

You can make a difference! Here's what you can do:

1. Read our quarterly newsletters on ACCR's website under "WHAT'S NEW" and submit information for publication.
2. **Ask your state legislator NOW to vote yes in the 2008 Legislative Session to Let the People Vote for a Constitution Convention.**
3. 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
 E: lpate@sirate.com

ACCR, INC. MEMBERSHIP NEW OR RENEWAL

NAME: _____

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 Gift membership for a friend \$ _____ Please include their name(s) and contact information

Mail this form with your check to:
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ALABAMA CITIZENS FOR
CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

Published by Alabama Citizens for Constitutional Reform. We welcome submissions of articles, announcements, opinions, photographs, and suggestions related to Alabama constitutional reform. All submissions are subject to approval by the ACCR editorial board.

To submit:
E-mail: accrvoice@yahoo.com

ACCR Foundation or ACCR, Inc.:
P. O. Box 10746
Birmingham, AL 35202-0746

Phone and E-mail:

ACCR Foundation
(205) 266-3371

ACCRFoundation@constitutionALreform.org

ACCR, Inc.
(205) 540-7501

ACCRInc@constitutionALreform.org

The ACCR FOUNDATION is a 501(c)3 non-profit education organization and ACCR, INC., is a 501(c)4 advocacy organization. Both of these non-partisan groups grew out of a rally in Tuscaloosa on April 7, 2000, as part of a grassroots movement for civic renewal and constitutional revision.

We are devoted to the idea that people deserve the best government they can design. 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.

The Constitutional Reform Movement begins with the citizen, who holds the highest office in our democracy.

For FREE e-mail subscription, go to:
www.constitutionalreform.org

Please take a moment to click the "Get Involved" button on the top of our home page (www.constitutionALreform.org) to sign up for one or more of these volunteer opportunities:

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- Distribute CR info at public events
- Help with graphic design work
- Make phone calls
- Send emails
- Meet with legislators locally
- Meet with legislators in Montgomery
- Join local Legislative Action Team
- Share other gifts and talents, please call me