



ALABAMA UTILITY CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION

TIM AYERS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
FEBRUARY 2017

Director's Comments:



February was a big month for Alabama politics. Alabama Senator Jeff Sessions was confirmed as the new United States Attorney General. He immediately resigned his United States Senate seat, and Alabama Attorney General Luther Strange was then appointed by Governor Bentley to complete the remainder of Sessions' term. The selection of Strange to the U.S. Senate, without requiring a special election, has not been without controversy.

Governor Bentley also appointed Steve Marshall as the new Alabama Attorney General to fill the office vacated by Strange. This is an especially unique dynamic considering the Attorney General's Office has an ongoing investigation against Governor Bentley.

Also, the 2017 Alabama Legislature convened on February 7th in Montgomery. Through just the first six Legislative Days, a total of 561 bills were introduced between the House and Senate. A number of these bills could have an impact on our industry, and we are continuing to monitor them closely. Among these are the Prison Construction Bill (SB59), and a bill (HB40) that would allow for bidding preference for local contractors on Public Works Projects.

Throughout the session, I, along with AUCA's Lobbyist B.T. Crowe, will maintain a presence in Montgomery to voice the concerns of our members to our elected officials. However, on March 8th, we invite any AUCA member that can take the time to come to join us firsthand as we hold our annual "Charge the Hill" Legislative Awareness Day.

We hope to see you there helping make a difference for our industry!

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Tim

Upcoming AUCA Events:

Mobile Area Lunch Meeting

March 2, 2017

11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

*New OSHA Recordkeeping Requirements
and OSHA Silica Rule for Construction
Presented by Safety Plus Inc.*

Wintzell's Oyster House

6700 Airport Boulevard, Mobile, AL 36608

We are finalizing the dates and details for the remaining local lunch meetings in Birmingham, Tuscaloosa & Huntsville. Be on the lookout for email updates.

AUCA Board of Directors Meeting

Wednesday, March 8, 2017

12:00 p.m.

Arrowhead Country Club

Montgomery, AL

**Washington, D.C. Fly-In
& Clean Water Construction Coalition Reception**

May 2017

Please contact AUCA Office for additional details



Upcoming AUCA Events:

Charge the Hill - Legislative Awareness Day

Wednesday, March 8, 2017

9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

State House Building

11 South Union Street, Montgomery, AL 36130



The 2017 Alabama Legislative Session is underway, and there have already been a number of bills introduced that could impact our industry.

This is your opportunity as AUCA members to join together in a unified voice to help educate our Legislators on the concerns of the workforce that supplies, installs, and rehabilitates the infrastructure of water, sewer, gas, electrical, telecommunications, and other underground utility systems throughout Alabama.



Upcoming AUCA Events:

May 11, 2017
***Spring General Meeting,
Golf Tournament, and
Low Country Shrimp &
Crawfish Boil***

**Arrowhead Country Club
Montgomery, AL**



*Golf Tournament & Meeting Registration Information Will Be Sent Out
Soon. Register Early Before the Event Fills Up.*



October 19, 2017
***Fall General Meeting
& Sporting Clay Shoot***



**Lower Wetumpka Shotgun Sports Club
Montgomery, AL**

Mark your calendars today!





AUCA MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:

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News & Notes:

Ditch Witch of Alabama wins Crescent Club Award

Congratulations to AUCA member company Ditch Witch of Alabama for recently being presented with The Crescent Club Award as one of the top dealerships in 2016.

The Crescent Club award is the highest honor given to dealerships that best support the company's "We're In This Together" philosophy by providing customers with superior service to be more productive and confident on the jobsite.

Pictured receiving the award from Tiffany Sewell-Howard, Executive Chair of The Charles Machine Works are Brian Parker, Vice -President (left); Paul O'Dell, Parts & Equipment Sales Support; and Brooke Parker O'Dell, President Ditch Witch of Alabama.



Ditch Witch of Alabama representatives receiving the Crescent Club Award.

2017 AUCA Membership Dues Renewal

January began our 2017 membership renewal period. We are off to a strong start with our renewals. We are grateful to the many companies that have already paid their 2017 AUCA dues, as well as to those that have made additional voluntary contributions to our Legislative PAC Fund. For those that have not yet renewed, please make arrangements to submit your payment as quickly as possible.

Should you have any questions, need another copy of the invoice sent to you, or wish to pay by credit card, please contact the AUCA office at (205) 582-9436.

AUCA Website Launch:

AUCA has launched the revamped website, which can be found at www.aluca.org. There are still some sections that are not complete, but we will now have the ability to update the site in house, and it will be mobile responsive when viewed on phones, tablets, or other mobile devices.



News & Notes:

Alabama One-Call Notification System Study Commission Update:

The One-Call Study Commission will meet in Montgomery on March 10th to further discuss Enforcement and Mandatory Membership for a Single Statewide One-Call Program. If you would like to attend the meeting, or offer any feedback, please contact the AUCA office at (205) 582-9436.

WIFIA Webinar:

The EPA will hold a webinar on March 7 on how to apply for WIFIA, the new Federal water infrastructure financing program. Utilities, governments, or private companies that partner with a public agency are eligible for loans from this program. The deadline for submitting letters of interest for the first round of funding is April 10.

You may access the webinar by clicking on the below link:

[WIFIA - Letter of Interest Submission and Project Selection](#)
[Tuesday, March 7, 2017 12:00:00 PM CST - 1:30:00 PM CST](#)

USDA Announces Funding Opportunity for Broadband: Community Connect Grants

Application closes: March 13, 2017

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-connect-grants>

Funding amount: \$100,000 - \$3,000,000

The Community-Oriented Connectivity Broadband Grant Program (Community Connect Grant Program) is designed to provide financial assistance to provide service at the Broadband Grant Speed in rural, economically-challenged communities where broadband service does not currently exist. Grant funds may be used to: (1) deploy service at the Broadband Grant Speed to critical community facilities, rural residents, and rural businesses, (2) construct, acquire, or expand a community center, and (3) equip a community center that provides free access to service at the Broadband Grant Speed to community residents for at least two years. Grants will be awarded on a competitive basis for entities to serve all premises in eligible rural areas at the Broadband Grant Speed to ensure rural consumers enjoy the same quality and range of broadband services as are available in urban and suburban communities. Eligible applicants include: Most State and local governments; Federally-recognized Tribes; Non-profits; and For-profit corporations.



Legislative News:

Alabama Update:

The 2017 Alabama Legislature also convened at noon on Tuesday, February 7th

A number of bills have already been introduced that could have an impact on our industry. Among these is the much discussed Prison Construction Bill (SB59). Governor Bentley has declared as his top priority for this year to borrow \$800 million to build four new state prisons. A similar bill was introduced last year and failed. This year's version once again contains the controversial "Alternative Project Delivery Methods" language. AUCA will oppose the Prison Bill if it continues to include the provision for "Alternative Project Delivery Methods" to be used on the construction of these projects.

HB40 is another bill that we are watching very closely. This bill deals with bidding preference for local contractors on Public Works projects. AUCA is opposed to HB40 because this bill would not be in the best interest of our many Contractor members that successfully perform work in more than one county. Additionally, the potential for taking a bidder that wasn't low would be an additional cost burden on taxpayers, and could also open the door for corruption opportunities.

HB199 deals with competitive bidding on ALDOT projects. A similar bill was introduced last year, but was unsuccessful in passing. HB199 would allow the Department of Transportation to let contracts for road construction or maintenance projects without advertising for sealed bids if the project does not exceed \$250,000, with the aggregate amount of all such contracts not to exceed \$1 Million in a year. The current law requires that any project greater than \$50,000 must advertise and solicit sealed bids.

Several bills have also been introduced that pertain to Taxes and to Workers' Compensation Insurance. AUCA will continue to follow these bills closely to determine the impact that passage could have on our members.

We will continue to update our members on the status of these bills, as well as any newly introduced bills of relevance, throughout the remainder of the Legislative Session.

***Remember to check our weekly
"Legislative Pipeline" email report
for continuous legislative updates***



Clean Water Construction Coalition Report

From Bob Briant, Jr. - Chairman CWCC

Trump Administration Continues to Advocate for National Infrastructure Measure

During the Congressional Republican meeting/retreat at the end of January, President Trump met with Republican leaders to urge them to get moving on a national infrastructure bill to address the Nation's urgent need to upgrade its infrastructure systems and to prime the national economy. President Trump expressed his frustration that an infrastructure bill was not included in Congress's 100 - day schedule.

House Speaker Paul Ryan indicated last week that Congress will take up infrastructure and tax reform bills in late spring after the House has completed its work on a new health care measure and spring budget. He further commented that he plans to create "fiscal space" for an infrastructure plan in upcoming budget negotiations. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has responded that any new infrastructure program must have a credible plan to pay for the program and that the Senate Republicans are not interested in increasing the national debt. Leader McConnell stated that he and his colleagues are waiting on a proposal from the Trump Administration and Secretary of Transportation for their consideration.

It appears that Republicans are tying the "pay for" of any major infrastructure initiative to the passage of a major tax reform bill. Meanwhile Senate Democrats, lead by Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, have put forth their own \$1 trillion infrastructure proposal (A Blueprint to Rebuild America's Infrastructure). The Senate Democrats have stated that their plan mostly relies on direct federal funding and would partly be funded by closing tax loopholes.

The \$1 trillion plan details include the following:

\$110B for water and sewer systems; \$10B for ports and waterways; \$100B for roads and bridges; \$130B for transit and bus systems; \$30B for airports; \$50B for rail (including Amtrak and HSR); \$10B for TIGER Grants; \$75B for schools; \$100B for energy infrastructure; \$100B "Main Streets" in local communities; \$20B for expanded broadband; \$10B for VA hospitals and other VA facilities; \$20B for infrastructure on tribal and public lands; \$200B for a "Vital Infrastructure Program" for priority projects; \$10B new innovative financing tools, such as TIFIA, RIFF, WIFIA and an infrastructure bank



Fleet Safety:

Provided by Josh Broaddus @ J. Smith Lanier & Company

The Dangers of Eating and Driving

It's important to understand the dangers that can be associated with eating while driving. There are three common types of distractions that impair drivers' abilities to safely operate their vehicles and avoid crashes:

- *Visual* distractions occur when a driver's eyes are diverted away from the road to complete or pay attention to another task.
- *Manual* distractions require drivers to take their hands off of the wheel.
- *Cognitive* distractions take a driver's mind and focus away from driving.

Each of these distractions are dangerous, but when combined they pose an even greater risk to driver, passenger and pedestrian safety. Eating and driving often incorporates a combination of one or more of these distractions, including but not limited to unwrapping food packaging, using napkins, holding the food with at least one hand, applying condiments, positioning the food to take a drink and cleaning up messes. These issues and more make eating while driving a dangerous activity.

Consider these alarming eating and driving statistics:

- A study by Exxon Mobil of 1,000 drivers discovered that 70 percent of drivers eat and 83 percent drink beverages while operating a moving vehicle.
- The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that eating and driving increases the likelihood of crashes by 80 percent. Additionally, 65 percent of near-miss crashes are caused by distracted drivers who are eating or drinking while driving.
- According to a Lytx study in 2014, a driver who is drinking or eating is 3.6 times more likely to be in a crash than attentive drivers who are not eating or drinking while driving.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration ranked the 10 most dangerous types of food to eat while driving. The foods that top the list include chocolate, soft drinks, jelly and cream-filled or powdered doughnuts, fried chicken, barbecued food, hamburgers, chili, tacos, soups and coffee.

Going inside to order and enjoy your meal does not take that much longer than many drive through trips, plus you can use the facilities. Getting out of the driver's seat for a few minutes also helps fight driver fatigue. Give it a try, and work towards eliminating your distractions from safe driving.



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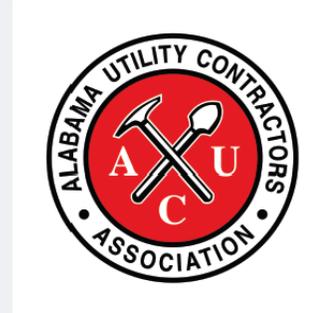
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For more information please contact
**Linda Smith and Jodi McMahon at
205-536-9204**

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FOCUSED TRADE ASSOCIATION CREATED
SOLELY TO PROMOTE AND ADVANCE THE
UTILITY INDUSTRY IN THE STATE OF
ALABAMA.**

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