

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE 15th Legislative Day – May 1, 2007

Today marks the fifteenth day of thirty legislative days in the 2006 Regular Legislative Session. To date 778 bills have been introduced in the Alabama House of Representatives and 457 bills have been introduced in the Alabama State Senate.

The Senate continues to remain at a standstill, signaling a bleak future for the passage of much legislation this session. We anticipate the standoff to break loose by the end of May in order to conduct the State's necessary business.

The House passed a number of bills to date, including legislation that would increase incentives and give tax breaks to large businesses in the state. The bill would apply to new companies that would invest at least \$2.5 billion and employ more than 2,000 workers. Recent incentive bills do not provide cash incentives, but do provide future tax credits against a company's state tax liabilities excepting that a portion of the tax goes to education. Also passing the House was a bill to create the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) Commission. Presently, the Transportation Director is appointed by the Governor. Under the provisions of the bill, the commission would appoint the state Transportation Director and oversee ALDOT's long range planning. Both bills will go before the Senate.

We are presently tracking 80 bills in the House and 38 bills in the Senate for the engineering profession.

UPDATE – HB 242

ACEC/Alabama is supportive of efforts to expand the pool of qualified expert witnesses in unregulated areas where engineering education, training and experience are required. Clearly, all citizens of our state benefit from efficient court proceedings where judges and jurors are able to evaluate both the qualifications and testimony of expert witnesses.

ACEC/Alabama is concerned that striking "testimony" from the current law might have unintended consequences that would negatively impact engineers' charge to safeguard life, health, and property, and to promote the public welfare. Licensed engineers in private practice deal daily with issues that have long term consequences for individuals, corporations, municipalities, counties, state departments and the environment and take that responsibility very seriously. We realize the importance of the proposed reforms and we're willing to work with the bill sponsors to ensure that the proposed legislation passes in this session.

ACEC's leadership met with Alabama Supreme Court Justice Sue Bell Cobb and advisors during the legislature's recess to discuss our position on HB242. The Chief Justice and her advisors were not opposed to our position. After our meeting, we revised our amendment to streamline and clarify the bill language. The Alabama Trial Lawyers Association and bill proponents accepted our compromised amendment offer. Talking points on this issue, which contain the ACEC amendment can be obtained at our website at: <http://www.aceca.org/legislative.htm>

PLANTING SEEDS for Alabama's Future for Alabama's future – Vote YES on June 5th!

During Governor Riley's Special Legislative Session the end of February 2007, three bills passed unanimously in both houses of the Alabama Legislature. The unanimous support is unprecedented in Alabama's special session history. These bills will be brought before citizens of Alabama on June 5, when voters go to the polls to consider two constitutional amendments impacting the future of our great State. These amendments do NOT affect taxes for citizens of Alabama.

Amendment 1: Capital Improvement Trust Fund

There are approximately 30 companies currently considering making Alabama their business home or expanding their present Alabama-based operations. These projects are located throughout Alabama. In order for Alabama to continue offering economic incentives to new and existing businesses, the bonding (borrowing) cap on the Capital Improvement Trust Fund must be increased. This amendment raises the current \$350 million bonding cap to \$750 million in order to grow economic development in the State. A YES vote will mean thousands of jobs for citizens of Alabama & billions of new dollars flowing into our economy!

Amendment 2: Healthcare for Retired Employees

New federal reporting guidelines require that states must, for the first time, report the estimated future healthcare costs of retired state employees and teachers. The Alabama Legislature approved the creation of irrevocable trust funds - the mechanisms for which to fund this liability. Failure to address this liability can hurt Alabama's position with bond rating agencies, resulting in millions of dollars in higher interest payments on debt issued for school construction or economic development projects. A YES vote will improve Alabama's accountability, enable better policy decisions regarding future benefits and services for retired state employees, and insure that the Alabama Legislature and future administrations will not divert the funds to other projects.

Join Us Back at the Beach for SPLASHIN' GOOD TIMES

Join us back at the beach for the ACEC/Alabama & ACEC/Mississippi 2007 Summer Convention where hundreds of Owners & Principal Engineers from Engineering Companies throughout Alabama and Mississippi are invited to meet June 28 – July 1, at Sandestin's Golf & Beach Resort, in Florida. Nestled between the white sandy beaches of the Gulf's "Emerald Coast" and the sheltered inlets of the Choctawhatchee Bay, The Grand Sandestin and Village at Baytowne Wharf offers something for every member of your family!

Members, come network with your fellow engineering colleagues! Continuing Education credits will be provided, Day One programming includes: Trade Show, Leadership Development Series Alumni Meetings, Executive Committee Meetings, Back to the Beach Opening Reception.

Day Two programming includes: Trade Show, Exposure to Jobsite Injury & Death Claims Alternative Delivery Systems Session; ACEC Benefits Seminar; and Beach Party

Day Three programming includes: Trade Show, Business Development Seminar, Golf, Fishing and ACEC Closing Banquet. You can't afford to miss this event for the entire family!

Invite your vendors and suppliers to register to participate as an Event Exhibitor and/or Convention Sponsor for an opportunity to network with engineering principals. As an Exhibitor, you will have the opportunity to showcase your products and services to ACEC Members at convention events that have been especially programmed to meet marketing objectives.

Also, in addition to exhibiting at our Tradeshow, we invite you to consider the many Corporate Sponsorship opportunities available at our convention this year. For an additional cost, meeting Exhibitors and Sponsors have an exclusive invitation to participate in our annual Beach Sun & Fun event, Deep Sea Fishing Derby or Golf Outing, and all social events that are programmed for you and your family.

Sign up today! Due to space restrictions, we have limited this opportunity to the first come, first served basis. Please contact our Alabama Staff at (334)264-1500, or Mississippi Staff at (601)362-5100, if you have any questions. We hope you join us at Sandestin to help us make this year's convention a success! Visit our website for a convention registration package at: www.aceca.org

Cutoff for housing reservations at Sandestin is **May 28th**. Call 800.320.8115 to make your reservations today!

ACEC Golf Classic Returns Renaissance Ross Bridge Golf Resort and Spa



The Crow Friedman Group invites you to participate in our Second Annual Golf Classic, to be held at Alabama's premiere **Renaissance Ross Bridge Golf Resort and Spa**. Registration includes 18 holes of golf, cart, boxed lunch, 19th hole buffet dinner, golf prizes, and many networking opportunities with industry partners at Alabama's newest luxury golf destination, located in Hoover, Alabama. Golfers and non-golfer alike will enjoy Alabama's luxury championship course, with stunning views designed specifically for PGA tournament play. For golf lovers, this venue, which Golf Digest already calls "one of the top-50 trips in the world," is equivalent to a trip to paradise. Nestled in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, this all-new golf resort includes:

- 8,191-yard championship golf course, making it among the longest courses in the world
- Premier design for PGA tournament play on 330 acres of lush, beautiful landscape
- 1,000-yard cascading waterfall, connecting two scenic lakes
- Golf attire is required Steel spikes aren't allowed on course

Tournament proceeds will directly benefit the Alabama Engineering Profession. Mark your calendars for Thursday, September 6th and make plans to join us in Hoover for an event you won't want to miss! Look for registration information coming soon!

LDS Class VII to Commence

Planning for Class Seven of the ACEC/Alabama Leadership Development Series (LDS) is underway. Developed in 2001, LDS encompasses a year-long curriculum-based program consisting of four sessions, each covering a new and different aspect of professional management skills. Session five is held in conjunction with the upcoming Annual Convention, where LDS Alumni have an opportunity to meet and discuss issues in a round-table forum. Since its inception, more than 65 industry professionals have participated in the program which is designed to be a unique and rewarding experience for class participants - the next generation of industry leaders are challenged to more deeply explore their role in their firms and in the engineering profession. This program is a great incentive for the rising stars in your firm! Look for enrollment information coming soon.