

PLAN 2010

Our Vision for Alabama

Our Priority:

SECURE OUR QUALITY OF LIFE

In Alabama, we are blessed with a quality of life that is as rich as it is unique. Alabamians have a deep respect and appreciation for our majestic mountains and beaches, clear blue streams, abundant wildlife, and our many other God-given natural resources. Our strong family values and faith in God set us apart from most places in the world. Our personal commitment to helping our friends and neighbors – especially the most vulnerable – makes Alabama one of the most distinctive cultures in America. And our belief that decisions affecting individual Alabamians are best made by those individuals and their families without government getting in the way gives us a strong sense of community.

The job of state government and its employees is to serve the hardworking people of Alabama in a manner that is worthy of their investment and **representative of their values**. I'm proud that we have invested in first-rate programs such as Forever Wild to protect and enhance our natural resources. I believe that our commitment to improve our human services system and promote self-sufficiency through our "Strengthening Families" task force is beginning to pay dividends. And I'm pleased that we were able to strengthen individual rights by **passing the strongest private property rights bill in America as well as legislation that protects our Second Amendment right to defend ourselves**.

I believe that we have made great strides in promoting and protecting the values and quality of life that Alabamians cherish, but we can do more.

Our Goal:

By 2010, we will institute programs to enhance our natural resources, improve the delivery of human services to promote self-sufficiency, protect our individual rights, and stop the expansion of gambling.

Our Plan:

- **Enhance our natural resources with a Coastal Enhancement Fund**
- **Invest in alternative energy to decrease our dependency on foreign energy**
- **Provide incentives for citizens to adopt**
- **Strengthen our families in need by improving the quality and increasing the efficiency of our state services**
- **Protect our private property from government seizure with a constitutional amendment**
- **Stop the expansion of gambling once and for all**
- **Expand faith-based services to further the cooperation of the state and faith communities in caring for our citizens**

SECURE OUR QUALITY OF LIFE

CONSERVATION

Alabama's abundant natural resources stretch from the Tennessee Valley to the Gulf of Mexico. I strongly believe that it is our responsibility to conserve, protect, and enhance these valuable assets in a manner that encourages sustainable economic development and promotes the responsible stewardship of our environment.

Over the past few years, the development of liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals as well as new oil and gas exploration and production off of our coast has become a hot topic across the country. I recognize that the stability and growth of our economy is dependent on affordable and readily available energy supplies. I absolutely believe that we must continue to explore ways to reduce our dependency on foreign sources of energy and increase our domestic supply. I strongly support the development of alternative energy sources, but I recognize that non-renewable sources of energy, such as coal, oil, and natural gas, will continue to be – at least in the short-term – our primary source of energy. Unlike many other states, Alabama is proud to be a significant contributor to our nation's security and economic wellbeing through its onshore and offshore oil and gas production. You can rest assured that, as long as I'm Governor, the State of Alabama will continue to support a balanced, reasonable, and environmentally sound energy program, including additional oil and gas exploration and the development of LNG terminals, as long as it is fair and equitable to our citizens.

While I support the development of LNG terminals in the Gulf of Mexico and elsewhere, I believe that it is extremely important to proceed with caution as we consider permits for "open loop" deepwater LNG terminals. Most scientists remain concerned about the impact the "open loop" system may have on millions of fish and crustacean eggs and larvae – marine resources that are extremely valuable to the economy of Alabama. That is why I objected to an "open loop" LNG terminal off of the coast of Dauphin Island. **It is my belief that any decision to license or veto a deepwater LNG terminal should be grounded in scientific data, and if a license is granted, the people of Alabama should be compensated in order to enhance our natural resources.**

I also strongly believe that the revenues associated with lease sales and subsequent oil and gas development and production in the Gulf of Mexico, as well as revenues from existing production, should be shared in a fair and equitable way with the coastal states that support leasing and development. That is why I have continuously worked with our Congressional delegation to change federal law to provide revenue sharing with Alabama and other coastal states. For far too long, Alabama has been doing its part to provide our nation with a stable and affordable supply of energy without adequate compensation. Now we must ensure that the businesses utilizing our natural gas resources help us to improve our coast's natural resources.

That is why I propose establishing the Coastal Enhancement Fund.

While I will not ask the Legislature to earmark these monies, I will ask the Legislature to use revenue that is generated through LNG terminal permitting and royalties from new oil and gas production in the Gulf of Mexico to enhance our coastal resources. The fund will be managed by the Alabama Department of

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Conservation and Natural Resources, and the purpose will be to **enhance** our marine resources through programs such as habitat restoration and inshore and offshore artificial reef production.

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY

With gasoline at record prices, the time has come for America to examine the use of alternative fuels as a means to reduce our dependency on foreign energy supplies. Breakthroughs in alternative fuels, especially biofuels such as ethanol and biodiesel, offer great promise in the coming years.

By encouraging investment in biofuels, Alabama will become more energy independent, less polluted, and more efficient. Our economy will also see the benefit, with local farmers profiting from energy dollars instead of out-of-state corporations. Biofuels have the potential to become both an economic boost and an environmental safeguard for our state.

In 2007, I will propose the Alabama Farms and Fuels Act, which will seek to encourage commercial development and private use of alternative fuels.

This legislation will include tax incentives for construction of biofuels infrastructure, biofuels production, sales of biofuels, and purchase of hybrid and flex-fuel vehicles.

Biofuels Production Credit

With the price of agricultural products nearing record lows and petroleum prices approaching record highs, it is clear that there is great opportunity for our farmers and our citizens in the production of biofuels. We will propose a tax credit for biofuels production at plants located in Alabama.

We will also propose additional production tax credits for facilities located in a Favored Geographic Area to encourage economic development in the most economically depressed counties of Alabama.

Renewable Fuel Infrastructure Credit

Currently, even if Alabama citizens want to purchase biofuels, their options are severely limited due to lack of availability at service stations. We will propose tax credits to qualified refueling facilities for the installation or conversion of pumps that dispense biofuels.

Qualifying Fuel Efficient Vehicle Credit

Many vehicle manufacturers are stepping up to the plate with hybrid and flex-fuel vehicles. We will encourage our citizens to take advantage of these fuel-efficient and biofuels-capable vehicles by providing a state sales tax credit on the purchase of hybrid, flexible fuel vehicles (FFV), and compressed natural gas (CNG) vehicles.

Public Sector

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Alabama's public sector also has a unique opportunity to take the lead in the promotion of biofuels. Presently, only the City of Hoover has completed a full-fledged biofuels facility. All Hoover vehicles, including the police fleet, are flex-fuel vehicles and must refuel with biofuels, when available. This facility is open to all public agencies. By early 2007, the State Motor Pool will break ground on a similar facility to promote biofuel use within State Government, and all state agencies based in Montgomery will have immediate access to such a facility. **By 2010, we will require the majority of state vehicles to be flex-fuel vehicles.**

STRENGTHENING ALABAMA'S FAMILIES

Incentives to Adopt

Alabama's foster parents are among our most selfless citizens, as they make tremendous personal and financial sacrifices to provide a better home and a better life for children in crisis.

While there are substantial funds which provide for the special needs of foster children, the state board payments provided directly to foster parents for the daily care of these children is \$8/day and \$14/day, depending on the level of foster services being provided. Due to budget constraints the Department of Human Resources (DHR) has been unable to increase the amount of board payments since 2001.

We will commit to increasing foster care board payments by a minimum of 25% in an effort to better compensate foster parents for the actual costs they incur in providing a stable home to Alabama's foster children.

In Alabama, family is still a sacred and vital part of our cultural fabric. I know that I would not make it through a day without the constant loving support of my family.

Many of us have been blessed throughout our lives with mothers and fathers who have truly loved, cared for, and supported us. Unfortunately, there are some children in Alabama who are not as fortunate. In fact, there are more **than 5,000 children in Alabama's foster care system.**

These children are spending their childhoods bouncing from home to home because there is a shortage of eligible couples who are willing to adopt. Many times, families are concerned about the long-term costs of adoption, such as education.

We must do more to help these children find safe and happy homes.

We will reduce the burden and offer an incentive for families to adopt children who are currently in state custody by providing the children a scholarship to one of our Two-Year Colleges.

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Taking Care of Our Most Vulnerable

In Alabama, 21% of our children live in poverty and 35% of our children live in single-parent households. Although we are seeing progress, we must increase our efforts to address the needs of our families and, especially, our children.

Many families, while hardworking, still rely on state services to make ends meet. However, the system that delivers these services is cumbersome and confusing, leaving many of our families in need feeling helpless. An eligible family might have to deal with as many as ten or more different agencies, with ten different applications, and ten different sets of requirements. This does little to help those families who are in need of our help.

In addition, the cost of running the system is enormous. In the coming year, **Alabama will spend \$398 million from state funds on Medicaid alone.** We must work to lower costs by increasing efficiency and decreasing duplicated services.

In 2004, we set out on a mission to reform the way health and human services are provided in this state. Our goal is to provide services in a way that is accessible, cost-efficient, and helps families in need to reach self-sufficiency. Our **Task Force to Strengthen Alabama Families**, which includes all related agencies, has worked hard to develop a system that does just that.

I will propose establishing a Family Services Center in each of Alabama's 67 counties to increase coordination of state services and assist our families in need.

These centers will be developed by local communities to help families with an assessment of their needs, information on services, case management, and service referral. They will provide a personal, "one stop" service on a local level to Alabama's families.

I will also establish a web-based information system that will provide detailed information on state services and make it easier for families and those assisting them to gain access to those services.

This effort will expand into a more integrated statewide network for health and human services that will provide all of our agencies the information they need to better serve the people of Alabama in a **more cost-efficient, coordinated way.**

Improve Access to Services for Mental Illness and Mental Retardation

President Bush's New Freedom Commission Report on Mental Health (2005) identified "access to services" as a major barrier to prevention and treatment for those with **mental illness.** Ready access is key, not only to personal health, but also to the expensive costs of emergency and intensive care services.

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In the past 3-4 years, the number of available private inpatient psychiatric beds has decreased. At the same time, admissions to public psychiatric facilities have increased significantly. This has resulted in public facilities treating more individuals (typically 150 – 200) than their designed capacity.

We will expand community-based services, such as crisis and in-home treatment for persons with mental illness, which will allow most of these individuals to remain in their homes and communities thus avoiding the more costly inpatient services.

In August 2005, there were approximately 1300 Alabamians with **mental retardation** waiting for community services such as educational services known as day habilitation, residential services such as group homes, and in-home supports. Today there are over 1500 persons still waiting for services in spite of the efforts this year of the Alabama Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation in expanding services for 450 people. People continue to come forward for assistance at a rate of approximately 40 per month. We estimate that additional 500-1000 persons will seek services.

We will provide additional funding as we seek to reduce the waiting time for individuals with mental retardation to continue to live in and contribute to their community and, in many cases, avoid more restrictive and more costly institutional services.

PRESERVING ALABAMA VALUES

Protecting Private Property

Last August, I signed a law that gives Alabamians the strongest private property rights in the nation. That legislation was necessary because the United States Supreme Court, in a 5-4 decision, ruled that local governments can seize homes for private development.

Our new law restores the level of protection that existed prior to the Supreme Court's ruling in June. That ruling is a reminder of the awesome power that activist judges have, and unfortunately use, to rewrite our Constitution. Our new law counteracts that ruling. **I am proud that Alabama was the first state in the nation to respond to this misguided decision.**

As a result, Alabamians can rest assured that their homes, their farms, their businesses, and other private property are safe from being seized by government for a shopping center, a factory, an office building, or a new residential development. With this new landmark law on the books, Alabamians have the strongest property protections in America. However, I believe we must do more to ensure that it will take a vote of the people to remove these necessary protections.

I will once again ask the legislature to enshrine these protections in our Alabama Constitution.

Tighten Gambling Loopholes

I am fundamentally opposed to gambling, and I always will be. And Alabamians have said time and time again that they are also opposed to the expansion of gambling in our state.

In spite of that public opposition, state gambling laws are full of loopholes that allow some casino-style operations to pop up around the state. It is not just happening in the metropolitan centers of the state. I recently read that five gambling houses with “sweepstakes” machines have opened their doors in Coosa County, one of Alabama’s most rural counties.

The so-called “sweepstakes” machines are nothing more than dressed-up slot machines. In his ruling on an operation in Jefferson County, Circuit Judge Scott Vowell said, "The operation looks and sounds like a gambling casino, but under Alabama law, it is not."

That is why, earlier this year, I called on the Legislature to pass a bill that eliminates confusion over the definition of gambling and adds severe penalties to those who operate illegal gambling operations. The legislation that Attorney General Troy King and I proposed would have charged illegal casinos up to \$100,000 per illegal device for everyday they were in use. Unfortunately, the leadership in the Legislature set this bill up for failure.

It is time that we rid Alabama of these patently illegal operations that are threatening every single area of our state.

We will pass legislation that clearly defines gambling, sets tough penalties for illegal casinos, and effectively stops the virulent spread of casino-style gaming in Alabama.

Expand Faith-Based Services

Throughout our history, people of faith in Alabama have been an integral part of every aspect of our society. When people in a community hurt, the people of faith are right there to help them through it. When disasters have struck our towns, the church has always been there to help people rebuild their property and their lives. When a child is struggling to graduate, our faith-based groups are there to tutor and mentor. When a prisoner goes back into society, our faith-based groups are there to make sure they do not return to prison. When a senior is hungry, our faith-based groups are there to bring them meals. Thousands of Alabamians in need are already receiving a helping hand from faith-based and community groups throughout the state. These groups are vital partners in caring for those with the greatest needs because government can’t do it alone.

Today, we have taken a concept that has worked remarkably well through the decades, and expanded it. All of these programs are growing because **we created one of the first dedicated state Offices of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.** The innovative structure of this office has received national attention and been replicated in other states. This office has worked with the faith-based community throughout our administration to make sure these organizations were given an equal opportunity to compete for government funding for their programs. By leveling the playing field, we have ensured that

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compassionate and capable faith-based organizations are not excluded from the process just because of their beliefs.

One of the more impressive successes of our Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives is its involvement in relief for Hurricane Katrina. This office coordinated more than \$5 million in donations to the state of Alabama for hurricane relief and recovery. In addition, they also helped bring more than 4,000 volunteers to assist in relief and recovery efforts. Churches from all over the country came to care for our residents on the coast. Men and women cooked meals, distributed water and ice, and even helped residents rebuild their homes. It is truly remarkable how people of faith can bring hope to a disaster-stricken community.

Faith-based groups in Alabama are some of the most dedicated and effective that can be found anywhere. We must always ensure that they have the ability to do what they do best—care for our people and transform lives.

We will continue to expand faith-based groups' ability to work with state and federal agencies to care for and support Alabamians who are in need.

We will seek to encourage them to work in the following areas:

- After-school tutorial programs, GED and job training targeting drop-outs and other out-of-school youth.
- Child care programs for working mothers.
- Foster care programs.
- Day Care for families with seniors.
- Nutrition programs for seniors.
- Substance abuse treatment.
- Integrating faith-based organizations into disaster preparedness and response by developing a statewide Disaster Interfaith Network. The faith-based groups will partner with both professional and volunteer disaster preparedness and response teams in each county.
- Expanding and integrating our faith community into a comprehensive prisoner reentry program to assist individuals reentering society and thereby greatly reducing the chance of recidivism.

Each year, literally billions of dollars of grants are distributed to faith and community-based organizations across this country. Over the next four years, we are going to make sure that Alabama's faith-based and community non-profit organizations are competitive in the grant process by:

- Increasing awareness of public and private funding opportunities.
- Increasing capacity of faith and community-based organizations to provide services and compete for funding through training, technical assistance, education and outreach.
- Identifying and eliminating barriers that prevent full participation of faith and community-based organizations in the state and federal grant processes.
- Ensuring faith-based organizations interested in utilizing government funds understand both their right to compete for funding as well as the compliance requirements.

Faith and community-based organizations play a vital role in the welfare of all our citizens. We will do everything we can to support and encourage their efforts.