



**Robert Bentley**  
Governor

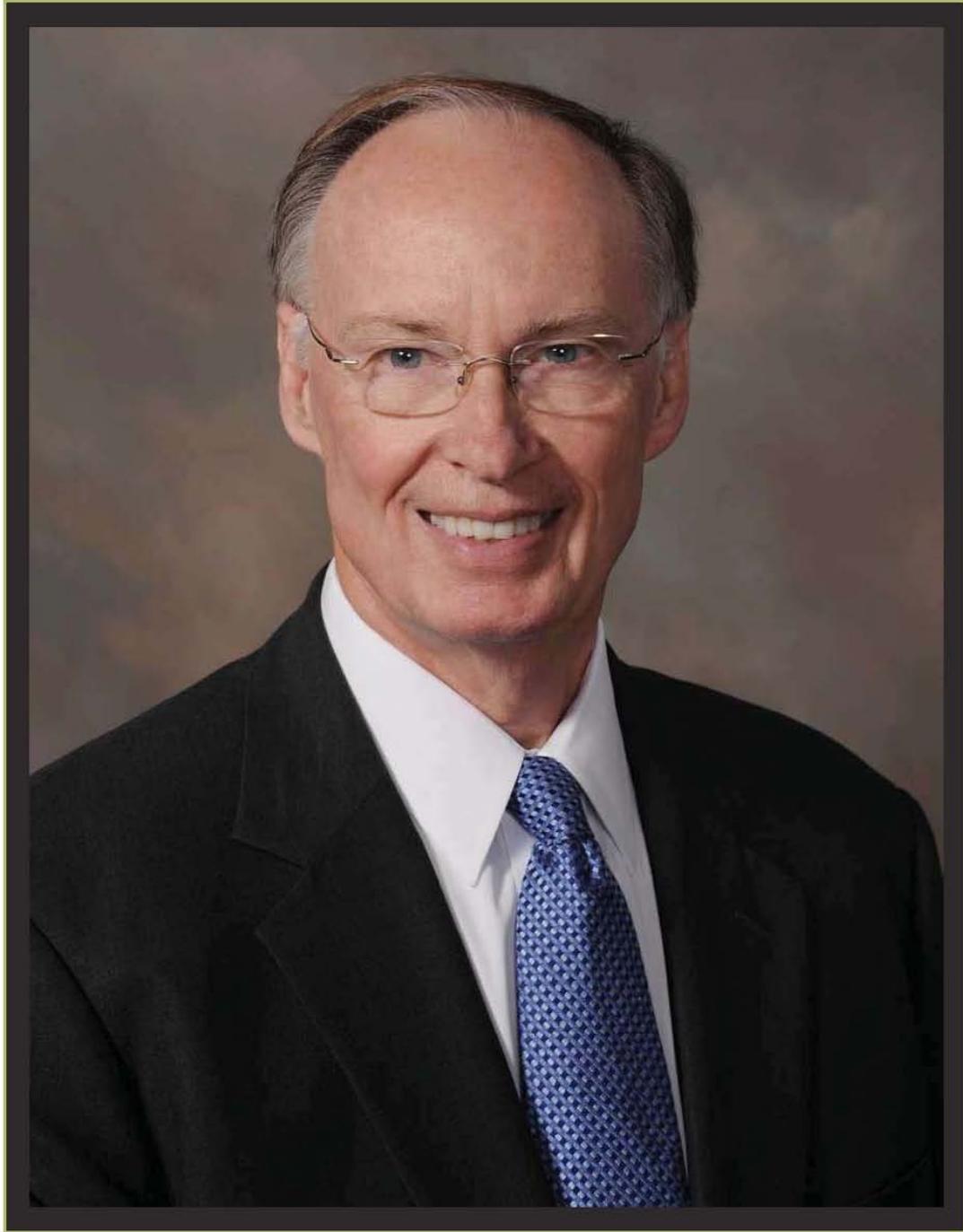


**Graham L. Sisson, Jr.**  
Executive Director



**State of Alabama**  
**Governor's Office On Disability**  
**FY 2012**  
**Annual Report**

The background of the text is a photograph of the Alabama State Capitol building, a large white neoclassical structure with a prominent portico supported by columns. In front of the building is a tall flagpole with the United States flag and the Alabama state flag. Several smaller flags are also visible on the grounds. The sky is overcast with grey clouds.



The Honorable Robert Bentley  
Governor  
State of Alabama

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**Staff**

**Graham L. Sisson, Jr., Executive Director**

Graham was appointed as Executive Director of the Governor’s Office on Disability in October 2007 and was reappointed by Governor Bentley in January 2011. He received his Bachelors of Science from the University of North Alabama in Accounting in 1987. Graham also attended Vanderbilt University and was awarded his Juris Doctorate in 1990. He received a certificate in Rehabilitation Leadership and Management from Auburn University in May, 2009. He was admitted to the Alabama State Bar in 1990. Mr. Sisson has lived with a disability since 1982.

**Sharon Mitchell Ward, Deputy Director**

Sharon joined the Governor’s Office on Disability in August 2010. She received her Bachelors of Science majoring in Psychology, majoring in Sociology and her Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling from Alabama State University. In May 2011, she received certificate in Rehabilitation Leadership and Management from Auburn University.



### LETTER FROM GOVERNOR BENTLEY

This annual report documents some of the work done by the Governor's Office on Disability (GOOD) to make life better for our fellow Alabamians with disabilities. Alabama has approximately 945,705 citizens with disabilities, comprising 23.3% of the state's total population. My administration is committed to increasing opportunities for those with disabilities and to tearing down any remaining barriers to equality they may face.

I depend on GOOD to provide reliable and helpful information on disability resources and unmet needs of affected Alabamians. GOOD is an excellent resource. If you need assistance with disability-related issues, please do not hesitate to contact the Governor's Office on Disability.

Sincerely,



Robert Bentley  
Governor



### LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I would like to thank the Governor and the Alabama Legislature for their continuing support of GOOD. Fiscal Year 2012 has been a year of positive growth and change for the office. Governor Bentley signed Executive Order 15 which clearly sets out the duties of the office. GOOD currently has nine local advisory committees around the state which provide grassroots input about unmet needs of the Alabamians with disabilities and to increase the visibility of the office. Likewise, a State Advisory Committee provides overall input to GOOD from different persons with disabilities and disability organizations. GOOD partners with these local advisory groups to facilitate the GOOD mission statement and strategic plan. The GOOD website was redeveloped to be more user friendly and will include a newsletter, calendar and additional resources. Meetings have been held with other state agencies to foster collaboration and maximize state resources for people with disabilities. A special thanks is given to the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services for its close partnership with GOOD.

Information about disability issues and training has been disseminated throughout the state. Awareness is a powerful tool which leads to greater access for individuals with disabilities. GOOD continues its role of dispensing accurate information. Join the GOOD list by accessing the appropriate icon on GOOD's website at [www.good.alabama.gov](http://www.good.alabama.gov).

In 2009, GOOD held its Inaugural Disability Summit. This Summit has been held consecutively since its inception. The 2012 Summit was held at the Crump Senior Community Center. GOOD extends its gratitude to Montgomery Mayor Todd Strange, the City of Montgomery and the many partners who helped to make the 2012 Disability Summit & Expo a great success. The purpose was to convene non-profit agencies serving people with disabilities to identify services at low or no cost. GOOD uses the information gathered from the Summits to facilitate strategies to help persons with disabilities.

We look forward to the progression and inclusion of Alabamians with disabilities in the years to come.

Sincerely,



Graham L. Sisson, Jr.

## GOOD Overview

The Governor's Office on Disability was created by Executive Order Number 43 in 1999. It was formed to serve as a statewide clearing house for information on disability and resources in Alabama. Its other major function is to act as a liaison to the Governor's Office on disability issues.

The Governor's Office on Disability's mission statement was revised in 2008 as follows:

Facilitate the inclusion of Alabamians with disabilities in education, employment, housing, transportation, healthcare, and leisure.

Governor Bentley's Executive Order 15 in 2011 re-established the Governor's Office on Disability under his administration. Resources are scarce in Alabama. The Governor's Office on Disability seeks to maximize disability resources by identifying existing ones and fostering collaboration among public and private entities that serve people with disabilities.

The Governor's Office on Disability actively seeks to engage communication between individuals with disabilities and their families and entities that provide services to them. GOOD's website, [www.good.alabama.gov](http://www.good.alabama.gov), is one tool that is being expanded to facilitate open dialogue and access on disability resources and issues. Additionally, GOOD holds an annual Disability Summit to bring together leaders of public agencies and non-profit organization that serve individuals with disabilities. The 2012 Disability Summit & Expo focused on non-profit entities which serve people with disabilities and identified free or low cost services for Alabamians with disabilities.

To foster communication even more, GOOD developed a list serve. Anyone interested in issues affecting people with disabilities can join the GOOD list by accessing the website at [www.good.alabama.gov](http://www.good.alabama.gov), clicking the "Join the GOOD List" icon and entering in personal contact and email information. Periodically, cutting edge information on disability will be shared with list members.

## Strategic Plan

### **(1) Legislation Initiative**

Monitor Alabama's disability related legislation and policies and provide policy analysis to the Governor.

**Objective 1:** Monitor constituent issues with regard to policy formulation and recommendations for legislation.

**Objective 2:** Serve as a liaison to the Governor on all necessary matters of interest related to the GOOD mission.

### **(2) Collaboration Initiative**

Establish a united voice to determine and meet the needs of the GOOD mission.

**Objective 1:** Utilize local advisory committees to determine the unmet needs of Alabamians with disabilities.

**Objective 2:** Partner with public and private entities, inclusive of state agencies, that advance the achievement of the GOOD mission.

**Objective 3:** To accept and resolve referrals regarding disability issues from the Governor's Constituent Affairs Office and other referral resources.

### **(3) Consultation Initiative**

Serve as advisor on public disability-related issues in Alabama.

**Objective 1:** Provide informal legal opinions on disability issues to the Governor's Legal Office.

**Objective 2:** Provide analytical information to the Governor's Legal Office relative to the GOOD mission.

**Objective 3:** Act as an expert resource regarding the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act and related laws.

### **(4) Dissemination Initiative**

Promote public awareness of actions and activities in fulfilling GOOD mission.

**Objective 1:** Increase effective utilization of available resources for Alabamians with disabilities.

**Objective 2:** Establish a website as the primary dissemination method of GOOD actions, activities and publications.

**Objective 3:** Promote local and/or statewide media coverage of GOOD actions and activities when possible.

**GOVERNOR'S OFFICE ON DISABILITY GOALS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2012**

**I. Disability Summit**

Collaboration and Dissemination Initiatives

- 2012 Disability Summit & Expo

**II. Convening Disability Consumer Advisory Council**

9 Council meetings during each fiscal year

State Advisory Council meetings quarterly

**III. Trainings/Disability Awareness**

**ADA**

- In collaboration with the Alabama's ADA toll free information services conducted:  
**FY2012** – 21 ADA Trainings and 39 Accessibility Reviews/Consultations

**Emergency Preparedness**

- Partnership with Alabama Department of Public Health on 'Improving the Health of People with Disabilities through State Based Public Health Programs' grant.

**IV. Information and Referral**

Number of inquiries on disability issues:

**FY 2012** 838 inquiries

**V. Website**

2012 Website redevelopment and design

Continuously updating resources

**VI. Legislation Initiative**

GOOD worked on legislation to address some of the unmet needs of Alabamians with disabilities. This legislation included the following:

- Accessible Parking
  - o Removal of minimum fine requirement
  - o Enabling language to deputize trained persons to issue tickets to accessible parking violators
  - o Requiring some form of identification on accessible parking placards

\* This legislation passed the Senate but did not come up for a vote in the House
- New Assistive Devices Warranty Act
  - o Extend Lemon Law protection to purchasers of assistive devices including but not limited to wheel chairs and hearing aids

\* This legislation passed the House but did not come up for a vote in the Senate
- Service Animal Legislation
  - o This legislation passed in 2011. It is now codified at 21-7-4. It ensures the right of people with disabilities to be accompanied by the service animal. It basically substituted the term 'service animal' for 'guide dog' in the Code of Alabama.

**VII. FAND**

The Governor's Office on Disability took a leadership role in this statewide taskforce in 2012. Originally named the Special Populations Taskforce, it was renamed Functional and Access Needs in Disaster to accurately reflect its purpose of ensuring Alabamians with functional and accessible needs are not only considered, but included in all phases of emergency management.

Mr. Sisson co-chairs this group along with Julie Schoening from American Red Cross and Stephan Mambazo from the Alabama Department of Public Health. FAND is developing a strategic plan and subcommittees to create a statewide infrastructure to meet the needs of Alabamians with disabilities in disasters. Mr. Sisson also serves as liaison between FAND and the Governor's Mass Care and Sheltering Taskforce. Those interested in joining this effort should contact Mr. Sisson at 800-441-7607 extension 7189.

**VIII. Partnerships**

Alabama Accessible Parking Coalition  
Alabama Council for Developmental Disabilities  
Alabama Department of Public Health  
Alabama Disability Advocacy Network  
Alabama Disability Advocacy Program  
Alabama Emergency Management Agency  
Alabama Head Injury Foundation  
Alabama Respite Coalition  
Alabama Statewide Assistive Technology Advisory Council  
Alabama State Interagency Transition Team  
Alabama State University  
Alabama Transit Coalition  
Auburn University  
Birmingham Committee on ADA  
Blind Advisory Committee  
Camp ASCCA  
Deaf/Blind Coalition  
Disabilities Unlimited  
Disability Rights & Resources  
Epilepsy Foundation  
Help America Vote  
Home Medical Equipment Licensure Board  
Individual & Family Support Council Region 1  
Lakeshore Foundation  
Long-term Care Rebalancing Committee (Medicaid Agency)  
Mass Care and Sheltering Taskforce  
Medicaid Infrastructure Grant  
Mobile Center for Independent Living  
Montgomery Center for Independent Living  
National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils  
OASIS Advisory Council  
State of Alabama Independent Living Council  
State Rehabilitation Council  
United We Ride (transportation)  
University of Alabama Birmingham/Civitan-Sparks Consumer Advisory Council  
Youth Leadership Forum

## EXECUTIVE ORDER NUMBER 15

**WHEREAS**, passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA") by the United States Congress imposed a requirement that employers not discriminate against people with disabilities in regard to any employment practices or terms, conditions, and privileges of employment;

**WHEREAS**, Congress specifically mandated that state government agencies be subject to the provisions of the ADA;

**WHEREAS**, Alabamians with disabilities and their families, may experience an economic impact due to their disabilities;

**WHEREAS**, people with disabilities have unmet needs in many areas, including but not limited to; transportation, education, employment, housing, transportation, recreation, health care, insurance, leisure and/or personal assistance;

**WHEREAS**, collaboration among public and private organizations serving individuals with disabilities is necessary to efficiently use available resources;

**WHEREAS**, a coordinated centralized effort will ensure all state agencies are in compliance with the terms of the ADA by the most efficient means possible; and,

**WHEREAS**, there is a need of coordination with consumers and consumer-driven organizations regarding state disability policies and services and a clearinghouse for disability-related information in one location.

**NOW, THEREFORE**, based upon these considerations, and for other good and valid reasons thereto, I, Robert Bentley, Governor of the State of Alabama, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the State of Alabama, do hereby establish the **Governor's Office on Disability**, hereinafter referred to as "GOOD," within the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services ("ADRS").

The purpose and duties of GOOD include:

1. To serve as point of contact for issues related to people with disabilities.
2. To collect and compile information on Alabama resources for individuals with disabilities and their families.
3. To remain current on matters of interest related to disability issues.
4. To monitor Alabama legislation and policies that affect people with disabilities.
5. To collaborate, where possible, with other Alabama public and private disability organizations and resources to increase efficiency in the use of available resources for Alabamians with disabilities.
6. To accept and handle referrals, regarding disability issues, from the Governor's Constituent Affairs Office.
7. To enter into inter-agency agreements or contracts with public and private entities, including state agencies, to further the purposes of GOOD.
8. To monitor disability constituent issues to the extent of developing, assisting in the development of, or recommending policies and/or legislation to address such issues in coordination with the Governor's Policy and Legislative Affairs offices.

9. To maintain local advisory committees around the state for the purpose of determining the unmet needs of persons with disabilities and otherwise soliciting their input.
10. To provide informal legal opinions on disability issues to the Governor's Legal Office and otherwise assist such office on legal matters related to individuals with disabilities.
11. To serve as the statewide clearinghouse for information on disability issues.
12. To prepare an Annual Report of GOOD'S activities and send a copy of said report to the Governor, Alabama Legislature, and the Commissioner of ADRS, and provide quarterly reports on GOOD activities to the Governor.

**BE IT ORDERED** that GOOD shall be managed by a Director who shall be appointed by, and serve at the pleasure of, the Governor.

**BE IT FURTHER ORDERED** that the Director shall be assisted by a Deputy Director, who shall be appointed by, and serve at the pleasure of, the Governor.

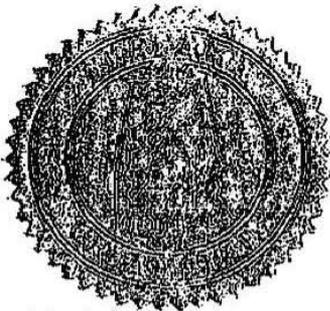
**BE IT FURTHER ORDERED** that all employees of GOOD, present or future, be supervised, managed and answerable to the GOOD Executive Director.

**BE IT FURTHER ORDERED** that GOOD be housed and located within ADRS and subject to its personnel policies, rules, and regulations to the extent applicable, yet remain a separate agency.

**BE IT FURTHER ORDERED** that if a conflict arises with regard to any previous or existing Executive Order, the provisions of this Executive Order shall prevail.

**BE IT FURTHER ORDERED** that this Executive Order shall become effective immediately upon the Governor's signature and shall remain in effect until amended or modified by the Governor.

DONE AND ORDERED this 16th day of May, 2011.



Attested

*Beth Chapman*  
Beth Chapman  
Secretary of State

*Robert Bentley*  
Robert Bentley  
Governor

## GOVERNOR'S OFFICE ON DISABILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Dr. Dave Martin, Chairman  
Auburn, Alabama  
*Parent Advocate*

Shannon Weston Byrd  
Montgomery, Alabama  
*State Agency/Mental Health Advocate*

Kent Crenshaw  
Montgomery, Alabama  
*Person with a disability*

Michael Davis\*  
Mobile, Alabama  
*Person with a disability*

Carl Flemons  
Somerville, Alabama  
*Veteran with a disability*

Ellen Gillespie  
Tuscaloosa, Alabama  
*Statewide Disability Advocacy Program*

Dan Kessler  
Birmingham, Alabama  
*Independent Living Center representative*

Phil Klebine  
Birmingham, Alabama  
*Person with a disability*

Seth Moates  
Wetumpka, Alabama  
*Person with a disability*  
(rotated off in 2012)

Scott Renner  
Auburn, Alabama  
*Person with a disability*

John Stephenson  
Jackson Gap, Alabama  
*Recreational Access representative*

James Tucker  
Tuscaloosa, Alabama  
*Statewide Disability Advocacy Program*

Ron Talley\*  
Birmingham, Alabama  
*Disability advocate*  
(rotated off in 2012)

Karl Wade  
Prattville, Alabama  
*Person with blindness*

\*Minority representative

A special thank you to the following individuals who have faithfully served on the State Consumer Advisory Council and are rotating off: Seth Moates and Ron Talley

### LOCAL CONSUMER ADVISORY COUNCILS

Councils serve as an opportunity for grassroots input from people with disabilities and their families and are located in the following areas:

- Anniston
- Birmingham
- Dothan
- Gadsden
- Huntsville/Decatur
- Mobile
- Montgomery
- Muscle Shoals
- Tuscaloosa

**FY2012 BUDGET**

	<b><u>FY 2012</u></b>
Personnel Costs	45,000.00
Employee Benefits	16,854.00
Travel In-State	0
Travel Out-of-State	0
Repairs & Maintenance	0
Rentals & Leases	94.80
Utilities & Communications	0
Professional Services	759.10
Supplies, Material & Operating expenses	5,490.28
Grants & Benefits	48,922.00
Other Equipment Purchases	0
	Total: <u>117,120.33</u>

**FY 2012 SMART BUDGET**

<b><u># of inquiries</u></b>	<b><u>FY 2012</u></b>
Projected	1100
Actual	838

<b><u># responded to within 72 hours</u></b>	
Projected	100%
Actual	100%

## Unmet Needs

Top ten unmet needs\* based upon the results from the Inaugural Disability Summit 2009

Transportation	Accessibility
Housing	Attitude toward people with disabilities
Employment	Education
Home and Community Based Waivers	Funding & Assistive Technology
Public Awareness, Information & Training	Medical Access

\* It does not appear that these needs have changed in the past 3 years.

## 2011 Disability Status Report - Alabama Summary

**Age:** In 2011, the prevalence of disability in Alabama was:

16.5% for person of all ages

**Disability Type:** In 2011, the prevalence of the six disability types among person of all ages in Alabama was:

- 3.1% reported a Visual Disability
- 4.3% reported a Hearing Disability
- 10.1% reported an Ambulatory Disability
- 6.9% reported a Cognitive Disability
- 3.7% reported a Self-Care Disability
- 7.8% reported an Independent Living Disability

**Gender:** In 2011, 16.4% of females of all ages and 16.6% of males of all ages in Alabama reported a disability.

**Hispanic/Latino:** In 2011, the prevalence of disability among persons of all ages of Hispanic or Latino origin in Alabama was 5.9%.

**Race:** In Alabama in 2011, the prevalence of disability for working-age people (ages 21 to 64) was:

- 14.2% White
- 19.1% Black/African American
- 3.0% Asians
- 30.3% Native Americans
- 18.7% Persons of some other race(s)

**Employment:** In 2011, the employment rate of working-age people (ages 21 to 64) with disabilities in Alabama was 26.2%.

**Looking for Work:** In Alabama in 2011, the percentage actively looking for work among people with disabilities who were not working was 8.2%.

**Full-Time/Full-Year Employment:** In Alabama in 2011, the percentage of working-age people with disabilities working full-time/full-year was 17.5%.

**Annual Earnings:** In 2011, the median annual earnings of working-age people with disabilities working full-time/full year in Alabama was \$33,600.

**Annual Household Income:** In Alabama in 2011, the median annual income of households with working-age people with disabilities was \$29,600.

**Poverty:** In Alabama in 2011, the poverty rate of working-age people with disabilities was 29.6%.

**Supplemental Security Income:** In 2011, the percentage of working-age people with disabilities receiving SSI payments in Alabama was 18.3%.

**Educational Attainment:** In 2011, the percentage of working-age people with disabilities in Alabama:  
with only a high school diploma or equivalent was 34.2%  
with only some college or an associate degree was 29.0%  
with a bachelor's degree or more was 8.9%

**Veterans Service – Connected Disability:** In 2011, the percentage of working-age civilian veterans with a VA determined Service – Connected Disability was 25.4% in Alabama.

**Health Insurance Coverage:** In 2011 in Alabama, 80.8% of working-age people with disabilities had health insurance.





Join the GOOD list  
[www.good.alabama.gov](http://www.good.alabama.gov)  
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