



# ON YOUR BEHALF

The Official Newsletter of the Jefferson County Commission HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

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### ATTENTION COUNTY EMPLOYEES:

Please remember that the Jefferson County Commission is under a Consent Decree. The decree prohibits discrimination against blacks and females which is also contrary to the County's anti-harassment policy.

Please contact your affirmative action officer, Kimberly Webster or Ben Sullen (325-5249), if you have concerns or issues regarding discrimination. You may also review the Consent Decree at your affirmative action officer's office located in the Main Courthouse Annex Room A-630.



Jefferson County Commission  
Human Resources Department  
610-A Courthouse  
716 Richard Arrington Jr. Blvd. N.  
Birmingham, AL 35203  
Phone: 205-325-5249  
Fax: 205-325-5598  
E-mail: [hrlistens@jccal.org](mailto:hrlistens@jccal.org)

## A NEW DAY IS DAWNING IN JEFFERSON COUNTY

Our Commission President, David Carrington, gave a powerful speech to the Kiwanis Club on December 7, 2010 outlining the path for a new day in Jefferson County. Commissioners Bowman, Brown, Knight, and Stephens joined Commissioner Carrington at this meeting as a sign of unity in this effort to build a more efficient and effective county government. Please take a moment to read Commissioner Carrington's speech "*A New Day is Dawning in Jefferson County*".

### "A New Day Is Dawning in Jefferson County"

Delivered to the Downtown Kiwanis Club on December 7, 2010

David Carrington, President of the Jefferson County Commission

Good Afternoon!

First of all, I want to thank Mayor Bell for introducing me, my fellow Commissioners for joining me, and the Downtown Kiwanis Club for inviting me to be with you today. A new day is dawning in Jefferson County and I'm honored and humbled to have been given the opportunity by our citizens to have a small part in moving the dreams of so many past civic, business and religious leaders forward.

As was mentioned earlier, today is a very special day in the history of our country – a day that President Franklin Roosevelt described as a "date which will live in infamy" – a day that changed the course of the United States forever. I want to take this moment to pay a particular tribute to those World War II veterans -- both the ones still with us and the ones who have departed, including my dad and my father-in-law – for the sacrifices they made so that I can stand before you today.

Those of you who know me personally, know that I like to speak extemporaneously. But, in this instance, I plan to read most of my speech so that my thoughts, on this the new Commission's 28<sup>th</sup> day in office, are clearly communicated.

As I was reflecting on what I wanted to say to you today, I found myself escaping to the 7<sup>th</sup> floor of the County Courthouse for inspiration. It is a quiet place. Mostly, it is a dumping ground for old county documents and unwanted furniture – but nestled in one secluded area, a few, very small jail cells remain. While I don't know for sure, I have been told that it was in one of those cells that the Reverend Martin Luther King penned his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail". Standing there in solitude, one cannot help but to be inspired.

In the quietness of the moment, I was reminded of a story I heard just weeks before November's general election. It occurred in the mid 1960's and focused on the first black nurse at the then white Bessemer hospital. The nurse had a 4<sup>th</sup> grade granddaughter, who loved to read. After the Bessemer library closed on many days, the grandmother would take her granddaughter to the back door of the library – where a



white librarian would let the two of them into a back room so the young girl could read every book that she could get her hands on.

The storyteller paused for a reflective moment. She was the young girl in the story and is now a professional woman in her 50's with grandchildren of her own. She closed the story by saying, "To this day, I have never entered the front door of that library".

In response, I promised her that one day the two of us would walk into the front door of that library together – and I plan to keep my promise.

There were no more words left to be spoken. Just thoughts of how far we've come in the last 50 years and a realization that our journey is not over.

As she sits here today, I'm confident that the grandmother in the story, rejoiced with a host of angels in heaven, when her granddaughter, Sandra Little Brown, was sworn into office 28 days ago, on November 10<sup>th</sup> of this year.

During these last few months, I have formed a very close and personal relationship with each one of the 4 other Commissioners our citizens overwhelming elected to lead our county these next four years. I've heard stories about military negotiations over tea in Egypt, a father's love for his son, and a nurse who was determined to become an attorney.

If you still read the Birmingham News, as I do, you know that the five new Commissioners have been frequently criticized by John Archibald and the Editorial Board, because we began to legally meet, in full compliance with the Open Meetings Act, as soon as the July run-offs were over. We met privately so we could get to know each other better – so we could understand each others' interests, passions and priorities – so we could form bonds of friendship before we began to address the monumental problems before us – and so we could be prepared to begin effectively serving our citizens on the first day we were sworn into office. If it were not for these meetings, I would not know Commissioners Brown, Stephens, Knight and Bowman as well as I know them today.

It was Dr. Martin Luther King, who in his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail", wrote on April 16, 1963, "Seldom do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas. If I sought to answer all the criticisms that cross my desk, my secretaries would have little time for anything other than such correspondence in the course of the day, and I would have no time for constructive work. But since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and that your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I want to try to answer your statement in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms."

So, here's my response to what I personally believe to be unfair and inappropriate criticisms by some in the media. As your Commissioners, we are going to do, what we believe in our hearts to be – after careful consideration and prayer – what is right; what is just; and what may be unpopular, regardless of the political consequences or the media's criticisms. I would remind all of us of Dr. King's words in his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail", "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere". Correspondingly, I would respectfully suggest to the media that "unjust reporting anywhere is a threat to just reporting everywhere". As such, your reporting and editorials need to be fair, accurate and complete, if you sincerely want to help us move our county forward.

It is imperative that the new Commission builds a new legacy for Jefferson County with integrity, trust, professional management and fiscal responsibility as its cornerstones. To do so, the majority of us in this room and outside this room need to recognize that the primary problems facing Jefferson County are not black problems or white problems; they're not District 1 problems or District 5 problems; they're not Republican problems or Democrat problems; nor are they problems of just the young or the old – or the rich or the poor. The problems facing Jefferson County are business problems with unnecessary political overtones.

When I announced my candidacy for the Jefferson County Commission on February 8<sup>th</sup> of this year, I identified five problems that I wanted the new Commission to address ...

- Recruit an experienced, professional county manager;
- Resolve the sewer debt crisis;
- Right-size government to live within our means;
- Restore the public's trust in their elected county officials; and
- Regain our position of leadership in economic development and job creation.

These priorities have not changed.



First, the county needs to recruit an experienced, professional county manager. This is not a job for a sissy. The current county management structure has proven to be ineffective [at best] and corrupt [at worst]. Commissioners act as both legislators (representing social and geographical districts) and executives (supervising various departments). Conflicts of interest abound. On or before April 1, 2011, the new Commission is charged with the responsibility of hiring an experienced, professional county manager. This executive will become the county's day-to-day chief operating officer. The Commission will then become a policy setting, legislative body, much like a corporation's board of directors.

Within our first seven days in office, your new Commission began the hiring process by developing and publishing a Request for Proposal, better known as a RFP, to identify the executive search firm we will use to assist us in the recruiting process. The RFP responses are due next week and we will hire an executive search firm by mid January. Since we have been told that it will take 90 to 120 days from that date to identify and recruit a county manager, we will be asking the Legislature for a short 2 or 3 month extension from the April 1<sup>st</sup> date so that a premature hiring decision won't have to be made.

Second, the county needs to resolve the sewer debt crisis. The county's annual net sewer revenues (after operating expenses and capital improvement reserves) are less than \$100 million and the bond holders are demanding more than \$400 million dollars annually in debt service and interest. I don't need to tell you that these numbers don't work. \$3.2 billion is a lot of money. During the campaign, I tried to imagine an example that would help me explain just how big \$3.2 billion dollars is. Here's what I came up with. I was born on April 24, 1948 at 7:32 p.m. If my dad paid a dollar on the sewer debt every second I was alive, he would have paid \$60 in my first minute of life; \$3,600 in my first hour of life; \$86,400 in my first day of life; and \$31,557,600 in my first year of life. If I took over for my dad when I reached 18 and still paid a dollar every second I was alive, I still wouldn't be at \$2 billion dollars today – and I'm 62 years old! It would take me more than 100 years to pay \$3.2 billion dollars a second – and then I could begin paying the interest!

I was asked during the campaign if there was any way the county could pay back the \$3.2 billion and I answered, "Yes, \$80 million a year for 40 years with 0% interest". However, since I don't expect our creditors to accept that offer, we are on hold until the sewer receiver publishes his recommendations in late January or early February. In the meantime, the new Commission continues to insist that the audited financial statements for the fiscal years ended September 30, 2008, 2009 and 2010, which will be required before a settlement can be reached, be expeditiously completed. Once both of these efforts have been completed, the new Commission will attempt to negotiate a material reduction in the debt at a fixed interest rate and term.

Third, the county needs to right-size government to live within our means. Before Judge Price's ruling on the occupational tax last week, the Commission instituted a "hard hiring" freeze and notified our department heads that we would begin a detailed, line by line, budget review. This process has just begun and will not be completed until mid January. At that time, the Commission as a whole will decide what our financial plans are going forward. I'm not sure where our studies will lead us, but I am confident in saying that the footprint of county government will be much smaller four years from today.

Fourth, the Commission needs to restore the public's trust in their elected county officials. One of my favorite books is Steven M. R. Covey's book, "The Speed of Trust". After reading Covey's thoughts, it's easy to see why trust relationships are so important. For example, if Mayor Bell and I trust each other, our transactions will be quicker and cheaper. If, on the other hand, Mayor Bell and I don't trust each other, our transactions will be slower and more expensive.

In the book, Covey also explains the two faces of trust: character and competence. Let's say, I trust Mayor Bell's character and competence on economic development issues. Our transactions will be quicker and cheaper on these subjects. But, even though I trust the Mayor's character, I'm not sure I would trust his competence to start open heart surgery on me, if I had a massive heart attack right now. In other words, trust on a particular subject is competence dependent.

With that said, the public's trust will not be restored until the Commission, as a whole, shows by its actions that the new Commissioners have the character and the competence to lead. When you're running for public office, it's easy to say, "you can trust me" or "leadership you can trust." I'm sure our six convicted, former county Commissioners made similar claims when they were running for the Jefferson County Commission, but they all let us down. It is up to our new Commission to show that we are different – and we did so with our first act as a Commission. We created a new, flattened organizational structure equitably distributing the workload so that no one Commissioner, including the president, can dominate county government as has been the case in times past.



All five Commissioners now serve on all five committees and the president no longer chairs the powerful finance and general services committees. In addition, we consciously selected a Republican to be our president and a Democrat to be our president pro tempore in order to clearly signal to our citizens that we plan to cross party lines in order to solve the problems we face.

Fifth, the county needs to regain its leadership in economic development and job creation. It has been difficult to attract new businesses and jobs to Jefferson County because of the uncertainty in our political leadership, financial stability and sewer rates. Once the County Manager is in-place, the revenue streams have been stabilized, and the sewer debt crisis is resolved, the Commission can begin to focus our attention on creating jobs both externally (by recruiting new companies to the area) and internally (by creating entrepreneurial mentoring programs for small businesses).

Earlier this morning, the Commission heard a presentation from Griffin Wheel, who plans to reopen a plant in unincorporated Jefferson County that will create 160 new jobs at an average salary of \$37,500 a year. Another major announcement is anticipated soon. Jefferson County is indeed “open for business”, but we will do even better as the economy improves and the Commission stabilizes its management and financial structure.

In his book, “The Paradox of Power”, Pat Williams penned the following few paragraphs on Walt Disney.

Disneyland itself began as a vision that only Walt Disney himself could see. When the project was still in the planning stages, Walt took his friend, TV host Art Linkletter, for a ride out to Orange County. Linkletter recalls:

We went and went and went and went and went, down through the orange groves. And finally we came to the place where it was going to be, and I couldn’t believe my eyes – because it was so far from downtown Los Angeles. And it was so small – the communities in those days were so straggly. And I thought, “My gosh, to put up a bunch of merry-go-rounds out in the middle of cow pastures is ridiculous!”

As they walked around the property, Walt described in glowing detail the various lands of his park: Fantasyland, Adventureland, Tomorrowland, and more. Then Disney advised Linkletter to buy property around the park and sell it to developers. “You’ll make a fortune,” said Disney. But Linkletter failed to grasp Walt Disney’s vision. He said thanks, but no thanks. Looking back on that decision, Linkletter calculates that each step he took on that property was worth about \$3 million – money that would have gone into his pocket but didn’t.

A few years later, Walt Disney envisioned another and even larger Disney theme park. He laid the groundwork, but died in 1966, almost five years before the opening of Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida. On the day the new park opened, a visitor commented to Mike Vance, Creative Director of Walt Disney Studios, “Isn’t it too bad Walt Disney didn’t live to see this?”

“Oh, but he did see it,” Vance replied. “That’s why it’s here.”

At this time, I want to ask the other four Commissioners to join me on the dais, while I close.

Henry David Thoreau is quoted as saying, “It’s not what you look at, but what you see”.

When you look at Jefferson County, what do you see?

When I look at Jefferson County, I see a beautiful county with rich natural resources; I see a giving community that is one of the most generous in the United States; I see civic leaders, who believe we can do better than we’ve done in the past; I see a business community that is open for business; I see religious leaders, who have opened their doors to all; and I see a new Commission, who has set aside partisanship in order to solve the problems we face – together.

I truly believe that today is the appointed hour for us to move our county forward. It is as if the prophet Mordecai is asking each one of us in attendance today, “if not you, who will make a difference in Jefferson County – and if not now, when?”

A new day is dawning in Jefferson County. We can’t move forward by living in the past. The 5 of us invite you to join us in making Jefferson County a better place to live, work and raise a family.

Thanks for your attentiveness. All 5 of us send our best wishes to you and your family during this most joyous of holiday seasons!



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## FLEXIBLE SPENDING Participant Plan Update

In March, President Obama signed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010 (collectively “the Act”). The Act includes a number of modifications to employee benefit programs.

Under the Act, OTC drugs, medicines and biologicals will continue to be eligible for reimbursement under health flexible spending accounts (FSAs), health reimbursement arrangements (HRAs) and health savings accounts (HSAs) as long as the request is accompanied by a doctor’s prescription. This means items such as cough medicines, pain relievers, acid controllers, and diaper rash ointment will now require a doctor’s prescription to be submitted along with the reimbursement request.

Insulin and other OTC items, such as band-aids, will continue to be eligible without a prescription.

Since this change applies to all expenses incurred on or after January 1, 2011, it will affect all plans and partici-

pants at the same time, regardless of the plan year.

OTC drug expenses incurred on or after January 1, 2011 will require a doctor’s prescription in order to be reimbursed under a health FSA, HRA, or HSA. Expenses incurred prior to January 1, 2011 will not. For example, an expense made on December 31, 2010 will still be reimbursed without a prescription, while an expense incurred after December 31, 2010 will require a doctor’s prescription to be reimbursed. Purchases of OTC drugs, medicines and biologicals after December 31, 2010 will require another form of payment (other than debit card). Once this out-of-pocket payment is made, the employee will be required to submit their receipts (indicating the date, amount, provider, and service description) along with a reimbursement form to Chappelle/BenefitElect along with the doctor’s prescription for the OTC drug, medicine or biological purchase.

Participants will receive this notice in more detail via U.S. Mail including “Facts to Know” and an example listing of items that can no longer be purchased using a health care debit card.

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Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact:

**Chappelle/BenefitElect  
at 1-800-257-0986**





## HEALTH & WELLNESS - STRESS? HOLIDAY STRESS??

When experienced for long periods of time, stress can damage your health. It can impact your sleep, mood and overall quality of life. What else? It can ruin your holidays!!! Use these tips to manage stress during the holidays or at any time:

- Exercise, take a brisk walk or try yoga
- Use progressive relaxation
- Keep a journal or diary
- Take deep breaths
- Make TO DO lists, this can relieve anxiety you may feel about all the things you have to do
- Eat healthy
- Try meditating or retreating to a quiet place when possible
- Get a massage
- Use positive SELF TALK, try counseling sessions and/or foster friendships and social networks
- Get a hobby

**SLOW DOWN!!!**

*For Your Health - BlueCross BlueShield of Alabama*



## SUBROGATION NOTICES

Many of you may have received a notice from the County's health insurance provider, BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF ALABAMA (BCBS), requesting information about a claim recently paid. The claim usually relates to an accident or injury and you are asked to complete a questionnaire giving details of the accident or injury to help determine whether BCBS needs to initiate the process of **SUBROGATION** and/or Reimbursement.

What is **SUBROGATION**? Subrogation is a provision under your group health plan that comes into effect when you are entitled to other benefits or settlements from another party related to a claim that has already been paid by BCBS. A good example would be if you are involved in a vehicle accident caused by the other party and you are entitled to a settlement from the other party's insurance company. BCBS is subrogated to all rights of recovery which YOU have in contract, tort or otherwise against any person or organization for the amount of benefits paid or provided. Simply put, BCBS may use YOUR RIGHT to recover money from that other person or organization to cover medical expenses paid by BCBS, which begins the Reimbursement process. BCBS has the right to be reimbursed or repaid from any money you or eligible dependents recover for an injury or condition that has been paid by plan benefits.

You are required to comply with the **SUBROGATION** process. This process helps and protects you. If it is found that another party is responsible for your accident/injury, actions are taken to recover this money which could in turn reduce higher premium costs for you in the future. If you receive a notice in the mail, please take the time to complete the questionnaire and return to BCBS. If not completed, upon your 3rd notice, HR is notified and you will then receive notice from Human Resources. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.



## MILITARY LEAVE

Please take these simple steps if you are going away on MILITARY LEAVE:

- Complete "Request for Authorized Leave" form, attach copy of military orders. Request must be signed by your Department Head. The Payroll Coordinator will initiate Personnel Action (PA) detailing your leave.
- You must alert the Human Resources FMLA Coordinator (Bettie Banks Coleman). This is important so you will be aware of your rights and responsibility while on Military Leave. If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Coleman at 205-325-5249.
- Be sure to contact Human Resources - Benefits, to inform us of your intent to terminate or continue any benefits in which you are currently enrolled. If you wish to cancel, change forms must be completed with a copy of your military orders. To continue your benefits, you must pay your portion each month (amounts that would normally be payroll deducted) while you are away on leave. If premiums are unpaid, your benefits **WILL BE TERMINATED** on you and your dependents. Proper notice to Human Resources of your Military Leave will allow you to re-enroll in any benefits you terminated upon your return to work. If you have any questions, please contact Marilyn Johnson or Nakia Buckner in Human Resources at 205-325-5249.



## JEFFERSON COUNTY COURTHOUSE SHOWS CHRISTMAS SPIRIT



While the HR department attempts to review and monitor the contents of the submissions in the personal sections of its newsletter, the views expressed in the personal sections (which may include Your Voice, Personellities and HR Corner) are the personal views of county employees and are not necessarily the views of the Jefferson County Commission, the Human Resources Department, its staff or employees. Concerns regarding material on these pages may be addressed to [hrlistens@jccal.org](mailto:hrlistens@jccal.org).



# SAFETY & YOU - Home Safety Tips for the WINTER SEASON

As we prepare for the upcoming winter months and look for ways to lower our energy bills, let's not forget about safety. During the winter season, more home fires are started by heating equipment than any other cause. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that space heaters, including both fixed and portable heaters, are associated with about 21,800 residential fires every year. Other heating sources including fuel-burning equipment, such as furnaces, wood stoves, fireplaces, and kerosene heaters which can produce carbon monoxide, a deadly gas that has claimed nearly 300 lives in homes each year according to The US Consumer Product Safety Commission. You can stay warm and safe this winter by following these tips:

### When using Portable Space Heaters:

- Make sure your heater has been tested for safety. Look on the bottom for a label such as ETL, UL or CSA.
- Have at least 3 feet of space all around the heater and away from anything that can burn (curtains, furniture, etc).
- Never leave a portable heater unattended. Turn off space heaters before leaving a room or going to sleep.
- Never drape anything over the heater to dry.
- Do not use an extension cord with a portable heater.
- Both portable gas and electric heaters should be inspected annually.

### When using Fireplaces and Wood Stoves:

- Burn only seasoned hardwood like oak, ash or maple. Do not burn trash.
- Make sure flue is open.
- Install at least one carbon monoxide alarm near sleeping areas.
- Never leave unattended.
- Keep doors open to the rest of the house for proper ventilation.
- Do not burn gift wrap paper.

### Be "Ready-to-Go" or "Ready-to-Stay" if the power goes out:

- Stock up on batteries, flashlights, portable radios, canned foods, manual can openers, bottled water and blankets.
- Use flashlights instead of candles to avoid a possible fire hazard.
- If the temperature outside is below freezing and your home has no heat, run water at a trickle to help prevent pipes from freezing and bursting.
- Store perishable food outside in the snow or in an unheated outside building.

Source: HomeSafetyCouncil.org

## HR CORNER



### JOB OPPORTUNITIES!!

#### Medical Director

Position Closing Date: 12/30/10

Please visit the Personnel Board of Jefferson County's job site at [www.jobsquest.org](http://www.jobsquest.org) for more information.

### ADDRESS

#### ATTN: County Employees:

It is very important that you keep your current address on file. All address changes and updates should be done in the Payroll Department. Please remember, very important notices are mailed as well as tax information. Please Update your ADDRESS!



### HOLIDAY RECIPIE

#### Christmas KoolAid Pie

- 1 Graham Cracker Pie Crust
- 1 Tub of COOL WHIP
- 1 Pack of your Favorite Kool Aid (Lemon Lime for Key lime Pie Taste).
- 1 Can of EAGLE BRAND condensed milk.

Fold Milk into Cool Whip; Add Kool Aid, Mix. Pour into pie crust; chill in the refrigerator for 2 hours. ENJOY!!!