



Of the people, by the people,

For the People



A publication by the Calhoun County Democratic Committee, Jan-Feb-Mar-Apr 2024



Inspire Inclusion

The campaign theme for International Women's Day, March 8, 2024, was 'Inspire Inclusion.' When we inspire others to understand and value women's inclusion, we forge a better world. And when women themselves are inspired to be included, there's a sense of belonging, relevance, and empowerment.

[#InspireInclusion](#)

Women from Calhoun and surrounding counties gathered at the Jim and Shirley Justice Center in Anniston to celebrate each other and hear speaker Merika Coleman, representing District 19, Alabama State Senate and special guest Lilly Ledbetter.

Forty eight women signed up to attend (the max capacity was 50); several couldn't make it; then there were some 'walk ins' who made up the difference. Each and every one of these powerful women had something to contribute. Some got away before we managed to gather for this photo. It truly was an inspirational event. [#InspireInclusion](#) (cont'd on p. 9)

Calhoun County Democratic Party Newsletter: Jan-Feb-Mar-Apr 2024

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I’ve been told by a couple of people that the newsletters are way too long, that they should be more like ‘bullets’ or short paragraphs. That might work for a group that doesn’t do much – but it won’t work for CalCoDems. This newsletter represents the first four months of 2024 – lots of hard work and time spent - by many people. Others need to know what is happening in hopes they’ll be encouraged to join in and support our efforts – more so in this election than any I can recall.

Please look over the table of contents and choose which article you are most interested in. Or get a cup of coffee (or two) and read it from top to bottom ☺ It isn’t ALL words - there’s lots of pictures, lol! Thanks! Meanwhile, I am working on a way to just ‘click’ on the topic – to open the individual article. That would greatly reduce the size of the document – but all the info would still be ‘available’ - you would just get it in ‘bites.’ We’ll see, lol! Beverly Williams, Newsletter Editor

PS please let me know if you would like to ‘unsubscribe.’ We don’t want to ‘spam’ anyone.

Women of Calhoun County:

Calhoun County has many Republicans, and it is natural not to want to alienate yourself as a Democrat with your Republican friends, but at what cost?

As women - it is our given responsibility to give voice to those who identify with us - but for whatever reason, are afraid to speak. It is obvious what the Republican party is doing to women everywhere. All of us saw the fiasco which happened regarding the

IVF situation recently in the Alabama Legislature. The Republicans jumped on this without

fully understanding what they were doing, or the ramifications involved and found themselves trying to remedy or back out of a bad piece of legislation. Who among us - man or woman - is okay with this?

Are we allowed to merely sit back and do nothing when the very core of women's rights and independence is at stake with the 2024 election?

In every step you take, no matter how small or uncertain, you are laying the groundwork for a future where some young woman finds her voice.

The time is now to join your local Democratic party and become a part of working to make a difference in the 2024 election with a Biden-Harris win.

We can't allow the fear of standing out or standing alone hold us back.

A few ideas to help you get started:

- **Social Media Campaigns:** Utilize social media platforms to spread awareness. Create and share posts, infographics, and videos highlighting the specific threats to women's rights and how they impact individuals and communities. Don't be afraid to LIKE something on Facebook you see which you agree with, but pass on by for fear of exposing your agreement.
- **Public Demonstrations:** When the Calhoun County Democrats gather to demonstrate a cause - join us. This puts pressure on decision-makers.
- **Letter-writing Campaigns:** Writing letters to legislators or key figures in support of women's rights.
- **Media engagement:** Write op-eds, letter to the editor. (Anniston Star no longer has an editorial page, but Calhoun Journal accepts opinion pieces)



Sheila Degan Gilbert,
Chair, Calhoun County
Executive Democratic

- **Legal action:** Support verbally, financially - the legal challenges against policies or actions that threaten women's rights.
- **Financial support:** Write a check, contribute cash, or go to <https://secure.actblue.com/directory/AL/party> (click on Calhoun County Dem Exec Committee). CalCoDems operate solely on donations – we receive nothing from the State or Federal levels. We could use your help.
- Act Blue is a very secure site and works with Democrats.
- We meet the third Thursday of each month at 6 pm for a Potluck Meal followed by a business meeting at our headquarters at 812 Noble St. Anniston, AL We usually have someone speaking on a current and important issue.
- *Join us and become a part of the solution and above all find a way to express your opinion on women's rights.*
- Call 256-310-0955, or 256-225-7032, or 256-225-3096 for more information

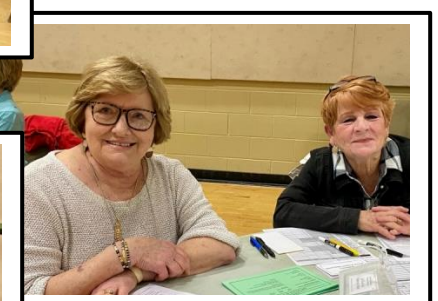


Calhoun County Poverty Simulator | 01/25/2024

-- Beverly Williams

Creating awareness around barriers to Prosperity in Alabama - Alabama Possible, a statewide nonprofit that breaks down barriers to prosperity, in partnership with Alabama New South Coalition-Calhoun County Chapter facilitated an in-person poverty simulation for the citizens in Calhoun County. The simulation was held at Anniston First United Methodist Church on Thursday, January 25, 2024. Alabama Possible utilizes the Community Action Poverty Simulation kit developed by Missouri Community Action Network (MCAN). This simulation is a hands-on exercise that allows participants to immerse themselves in the day-to-day life of a person living in poverty. It provides the participants with an in-depth preview of the systemic barriers' individuals living in poverty face and the impact it has on them emotionally and personally, leading them to the majority of times making disastrous decisions. As per CAPS, "It is a simulation, not a game. The objective is to shift our paradigm about poverty away from being seen as a personal failure and toward the understanding of poverty as a structured, failure of society."

Several Calhoun County Democrats participated in this program along with other interested and concerned members of the community. Any one of the role players will tell you how easy it was to become very frustrated with the 'system' that seemed 'designed' to keep them from 'getting ahead.'





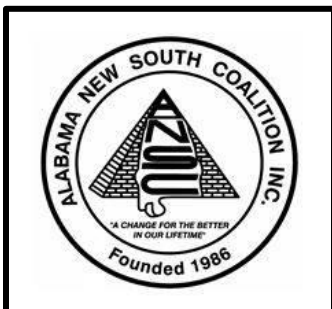
The pic above shows a part of the group gathered at the end of the program to talk about how the process made them feel: frustrated, angry, etc. and how their feelings about some issues changed, etc.

About Alabama Possible

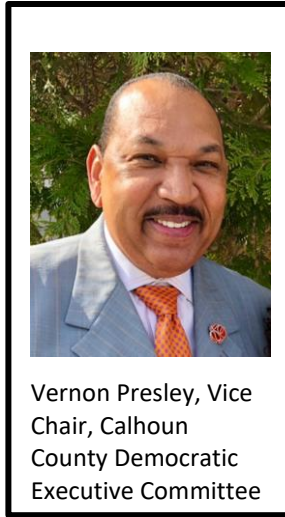


Established in 1993, Alabama Possible is a statewide nonprofit organization that breaks down barriers to prosperity through advocacy, education, and collaboration. We influence public policy to ensure every high school graduate in our state can pursue a technical or academic credential after high school. Our programs connect Alabama's educational leaders, students, and families with the resources necessary to cultivate a college-going culture and equitable educational attainment. For more information, visit www.alabamapossible.org

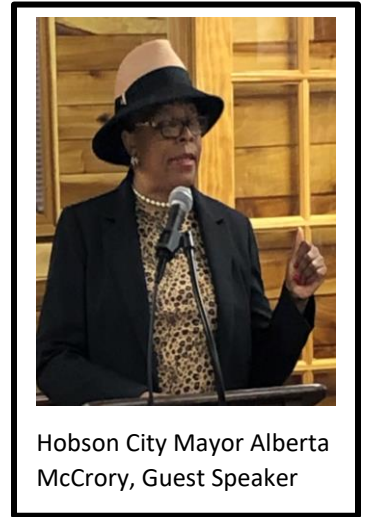
About Alabama New South Coalition-Calhoun County Chapter



The purpose of the Alabama New South Coalition is to promote the general welfare of all people through independent focused organizations dedicated to progressive ideals of freedom, justice, and democracy. Our specific objectives are to effect solutions to social, economic and community problems by constructively promoting Community Focused Organization; Voter Registration and Education; Economic Development; Cultural Awareness; Leadership Development; Youth Development; Progressive Legislation; and to coalesce and assist organizations with similar objectives. For more information visit <https://alnewsouthcoalition.org>



Vernon Presley, Vice
Chair, Calhoun
County Democratic
Executive Committee



Hobson City Mayor Alberta
McCrory, Guest Speaker

Calhoun County Democratic Executive Committee Vice-Chair Vernon Presley presided over the February meeting, which highlighted 'Black History Month.' Mr. Presley talked about the need for all of us to visit each other's homes and get to know each other on a more personal level - everyone agreed. Let's make that happen!

He also stressed the importance of voting - especially in this upcoming Presidential election. Talk to your family members, neighbors, friends and co-workers - be sure they are registered to vote and be sure they check their registration to see if all the information is correct. MANY voters polling places changed this year. Check your status and your polling place at <https://myinfo.alabamavotes.gov/voterview>

Vice Chair Presley encouraged us to help set up and man voter registration efforts in the community. CalCoDems can help with materials - if you decide to set up a voter registration table. Emphasis and attention should be placed on encouraging YOUNG people to register and vote. Many feel disenfranchised and don't bother.

Guest Speaker Mayor McCrory gave a poignant talk about where we are, how we got here and what some of the things are that we *must* do to have a positive impact on our lives and the lives of our neighbors. Her talk was entertaining, educational, painful and uplifting - all at the same time! She was an engaging and knowledgeable speaker and I'd suggest anyone looking to learn more about Hobson City, it's history, and plans for the future - reach out to her to speak to your group. ONE THING FOR SURE - visit the Hobson City Museum at [806 Martin Luther King Dr, Anniston, AL 36201](https://www.hobsoncitymuseum.com/). The new Hobson City Museum for the Study of African American History and Culture held its grand opening during the 124th Founders' Day Festival, which took place August 13-19, 2023.

HQ was filled to near capacity - which was amazing! Folks came out to see the program that Vice Chair Presley had put together - to hear Jason sing and hear what Mayor McCrory had to say.

Black History Month, which is celebrated each year during February, is a chance for Americans to learn details of their nation's history that, unfortunately, are far too often neglected and pushed to the wayside. As the saying goes, Black history *is* American history — and it's a varied and rich history. A wise nation honors and learns from its past. It refuses to let the most important facts about our shared and collective memory disappear into the depths of forgotten history. What happened in the past shaped and informed where we are heading in the future, and it's of paramount importance to set aside a month for learning as much as we can about Black history.

"Black History Month wouldn't have been possible without Negro History Week's creation in the United States in 1926. Famous historian Carter G. Woodson and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History proclaimed the second week of February to be observed as Negro History Week. Since the inception of this event, the main focus was to encourage the teaching of the history of Black Americans in educational institutes, particularly at the primary

level. The departments of education of Delaware, North Carolina, and West Virginia were very cooperative. The overall reception was lukewarm, but Woodson considered it a success and “one of the most fortunate steps ever taken by the Association.”

In February 1969, the idea for Black History Month was promoted by Black students and educators at Kent State University, followed by the first celebration of Black History Month on campus and local surroundings one year later. Fast forward six years and Black History Month was widely being celebrated across the country, and not only in schools, colleges, and community centers. In 1976, President Gerald Ford praised Black History Month, urging all citizens to “seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of Black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history.”

Education is a core theme of this holiday and providing Black students with access to education is a huge movement in the country. One way that many organizations do this is by providing scholarships. For students looking for funding, Schoalroo has a great database of [scholarships for Black students](#). The creation of Black History Month also led to some controversy. Celebrating Black history for one month seemed too confining, with many labeling it downright inappropriate. Another concern was that Black History Month would glamorize the delicate subject and lead to Black historical figures being simplified as heroes.”

WAYS TO OBSERVE BLACK HISTORY MONTH:

Visit a museum -

The Legacy Museum in Montgomery: The Legacy Museum offers a powerful, immersive journey through America’s history of racial injustice. History comes alive in a nation's museums, and many of these institutions have events, conferences, and celebrations surrounding Black History Month. Get out there and see first-hand the American nation's collective historical treasures. <https://legacysites.eji.org/about/museum/>

Contact an elected official -

One of the best ways to get the ball rolling toward a better society is by contacting members of Congress. Ask them what they have planned for Black History Month and what specific legislative actions they plan to take to ensure that your community never backtracks in its pledge to provide opportunities for each and every person.

Read, read, and read some more -

Libraries and bookstores — not to mention online repositories and booksellers — are positively overflowing with amazing works of Black literature, history, and biography. Find a book about a piece of Black history that you were previously unaware of and get educated.



Beverly Williams,
Newsletter Editor

Please watch the video of the Black History Month February meeting at <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1598311664332704>

We are planning a visit to the Hobson City Museum in the near future. Let us know if you’d like to join us. Email calcodem2019@gmail.com Those interested, will meet for lunch afterwards. 😊



Proclamation on National Black History Month, 2024

This National Black History Month, we celebrate the vast contributions of Black Americans to our country and recognize that Black history is American history, and that Black culture, stories, and triumphs are at the core of who we are as a Nation.

The soul of America is what makes us unique among all nations. We are the only country in the world founded on an idea. It is the idea that we are all created equal and deserve to be treated with equal dignity throughout our lives. While we still grapple today with the moral stain and vestiges of slavery — our country’s original sin — we have never walked away from the fight to fully realize the promise of America for all Americans. Throughout our history, Black Americans have never given up on the promise of America. Unbowed by the forces of hate and undaunted as they fought for centuries against slavery, segregation, and injustice, Black Americans have held a mirror up to our Nation, allowing our country to confront hard truths about who we are and pushing us to live up to our founding ideals. They have helped redeem the soul of our Nation, ensuring the promises in our founding documents were not just words on a page but a lived reality for all people. In the process, the vibrancy of Black history and culture has enriched every aspect of American life.

Since taking office, the Vice President and I have worked to continue this legacy of progress and lay down a foundation for a stronger, more equitable Nation. On my first day as President, I signed a historic Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government. In February 2023, I signed an additional Executive Order to acknowledge the unbearable human costs of systemic racism and to direct the entire Federal Government to advance equity for those who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent discrimination, poverty, and inequality, including the Black community. That includes building an economy that grows from the middle out and bottom up, not the top down. So far, we have created over 14 million jobs and in 2023, the Black unemployment rate was lower than in any other year on record.

We are addressing historic health inequities for Black Americans by making systemic changes to our health care systems that increase healthcare access while lowering costs. Today, more Black Americans have health insurance than at any previous time in American history. We are working to address the Black maternal health crisis — ensuring dignity, safety, and support for Black moms. The Vice President has helped elevate this critical issue to a national priority by calling on States to extend Medicaid postpartum coverage from two months to one year.

My Administration is also working to close racial gaps in education and economic opportunity. To that end, we have delivered over \$7 billion in funding for Historically Black Colleges and Universities and are working to expand access to home-ownership — a major source of generational wealth for families — while

aggressively combating racial discrimination in housing. Our update to the Thrifty Food Plan is keeping 400,000 Black kids out of poverty every month and making sure millions more have enough food to eat. By 2025, we are working to ensure that 15 percent of Federal contracting dollars goes to small, disadvantaged businesses, including Black-owned small businesses. We are also replacing poisonous lead pipes so every American can turn on a faucet at home or school and drink clean water.

To deliver equal justice under the law, we are appointing judges to the Federal bench who reflect all of America, including Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson and more Black women to the Federal circuit courts than all previous administrations combined. I also signed a historic Executive Order that implemented key elements of the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act: banning chokeholds and restricting no knock warrants by Federal law enforcement, creating a national database of officer misconduct, and promoting effective and accountable community policing that advances public trust and safety. I also signed the first major gun safety legislation in nearly 30 years as well as a long-overdue law to make lynching a Federal hate crime in Emmett Till’s name. My Administration continues to call on the Congress to pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and the Freedom to Vote Act to secure the right to vote for every American.

Today, I am reminded of something Amelia Boynton said when reflecting on her march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge on what would be known as Bloody Sunday: “You can never know where you’re going unless you know where you’ve been.” America is a great Nation because we choose to learn the good, the bad, and the full truth of the history of our country — histories and truths that we must preserve and protect for the next generation. This National Black History Month, as we remember where we have been, may we also recognize that our only way forward is by marching together.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JOSEPH R. BIDEN JR., President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim February 2024 as National Black History Month. I call upon public officials, educators, librarians, and all the people of the United States to observe this month with relevant programs, ceremonies, and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this thirty-first day of January, in the year of our Lord two thousand twenty-four, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and forty-eighth.

JOSEPH R. BIDEN, JR.

A little about our inspirational speakers as we celebrated International Women's Day

(cont'd from p1)

Women's Rights Advocate Merika Coleman, is a mom, advocate, professor, lawyer, and state senator who started her career as a community organizer and economic justice strategist working for both Greater Birmingham Ministries and Alabama Arise in Montgomery, AL.

She presently serves as an Assistant Professor of Political Science and Social Justice Initiative Special Assistant at Miles College located in historic Fairfield, AL. Merika currently serves as the chair of the Alabama Legislative Black Caucus.

Honored Guest Lilly Ledbetter, outspoken advocate for pay equity and women's rights whose work led to the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, signed into law in 2009, gave an inspiring talk to the women!

Please click below and watch the 'slideshow' of the event. You will likely see yourself :) While the Jim and Shirley Justice Center's comfortable 'luncheon capacity' is about 50 - we are convinced the event will grow in size and will be held at a much larger venue next year! The event is strictly non-political. It is intended entirely - to hold local women up for all they contribute to their families and communities. And to [#InspireInclusion](#)

Watch the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L3E5IEvITk>.

Admin note: Anyone who has not opened notices from the website recently (30 days I believe) are automatically tagged as 'inactive' - and no longer receive our posts. Please let others know to click and open email notices often enough - not to be kicked off the 'active' list. Thanks! Beverly

Men and the Dobbs Decision

The Dobbs decision and the overturning of Roe v. Wade has had devastating effects for the rights and health of women and all pregnant people nationwide. We know this. We see it in the headlines almost daily. **But what effect has Dobbs had on men in our country?** Some men step away, thinking this is not their issue. But while abortion in particular and women's healthcare in general is often seen as a woman's issue, the implications for the other half of our populace are real and should not go unrecognized.



- A recent study from the National Survey of Family Growth estimates that one in five men have impregnated someone who has had an abortion, likely an undercount since not all men are aware of the pregnancies they cause.
- A study done at the University of Southern California found that about half of men whose partners were seeking abortions already had other children and supported the termination in order to be able to better provide for their existing family.
- A study published in the Journal of Adolescent Health found that young men whose partners had an abortion were nearly four times more likely to graduate from college than those whose partners chose to give birth.

These studies point to several impacts of Dobbs on men. Unintended pregnancies can derail educational goals, thereby resulting in a lifelong economic deficit if lucrative careers are abandoned. Families with existing children may be forced to reallocate limited resources to accommodate additional food, housing, childcare and healthcare costs. Family dynamics may suffer if immature couples are forced into parenthood before they are ready or while under economic strain. When abortion is an option, these impacts can be mitigated if that option is a choice.

All these are issues that can result from normal, healthy pregnancies. **But what if the pregnancy is not normal?**

- Miscarriage occurs in 10%-20% of known pregnancies.
- Ectopic pregnancy frequency is ~2%.
- Clinically significant fetal genetic abnormalities occur in ~3% of pregnancies. How are men affected by the 15%-25% of pregnancies that are not normal?

Men who are in caring relationships with their partners suffer many of the same emotional reactions as their partner when faced with a negative pregnancy outcome. Many feel powerless when confronted with the reality that their partner is unable to access the healthcare that is standard of care for miscarriage or ectopic pregnancy because physicians and clinics are prevented from providing timely intervention. In the case of a fetus with severe genetic defects, when pregnancy termination is not an option, the father may also experience guilt and regret, as well as the feeling that he is ill-equipped, both emotionally and financially, to care for a special-needs child. Long-term care of a special needs child also weighs heavily on both parents. Appropriate and compassionate healthcare, hampered by the Dobbs decision, would ease these burdens.

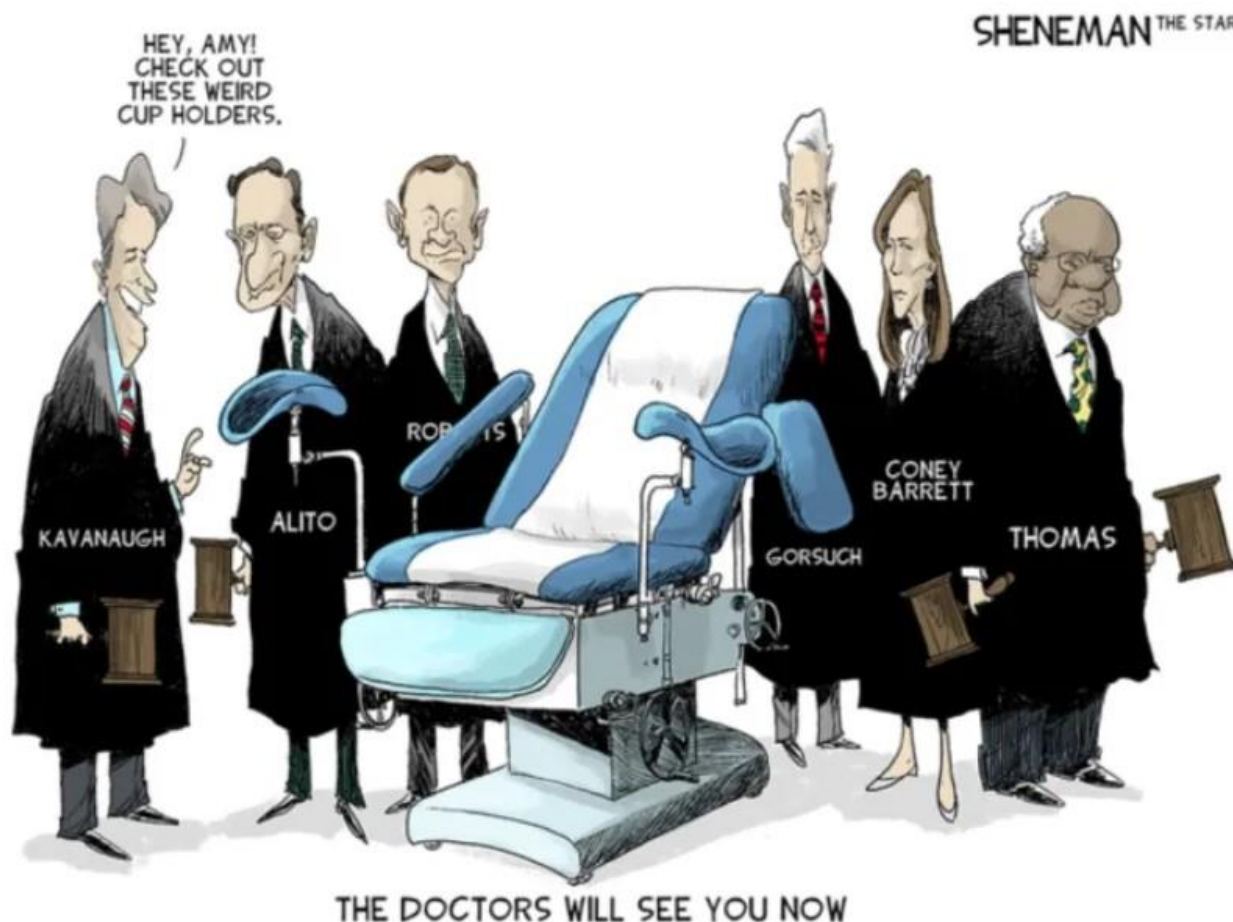
Moreover, men who choose to assist someone in obtaining an illegal abortion, whether by providing funding, transportation or other support, risk legal consequences. Even if the pregnancy is life-threatening, criminal charges, fines and even imprisonment could result from simply driving a pregnant person across state lines. This, too, is unacceptable.

So, what about older men? Men who have raised their families and are not as concerned with issues of pregnancy with their partners? Many of them have daughters and granddaughters! The worry, the fear that this and the upcoming generation will not have the protection of Roe v. Wade that they and their partners enjoyed - is perhaps even more disturbing than if they were experiencing it themselves. No father or grandfather wants to see his children have limits placed on their potential. No father or grandfather wants to see his children's rights taken away. And certainly, every father or grandfather wants and expects appropriate and timely healthcare to be available to their daughters and granddaughters.

Women's healthcare is NOT just a women's issue.

Polling has shown that 58% of men believe abortion should be legal in most or all cases. It is vitally important for men to get off the sidelines and get into the fight to restore and protect healthcare and the freedom of choice for the women in their lives, as well as for the country as a whole.

Donald Trump has boasted that he was responsible for the overturning of Roe v. Wade. The Christian Nationalists that he has inflamed will come for contraception, too, if we let them. **Let us all, men and women together, demonstrate to Trump that we will not let the rights that were the law of the land for nearly 50 years be taken away.** Joe Biden has proclaimed that he will work to codify Roe v. Wade as a fundamental right. Let's all do everything we can to ensure that DJT is denied another term in the White House and to give Joe Biden a resounding victory in November!



By Drew Sheneman

IVF and the protest in Montgomery -- February 28, 2024 - Advocacy Day

Calhoun County Democratic Committee Chair Sheila Degan Gilbert, HQ Office Administrator Carsie Evans and Talladega County Democratic Party Vice-Chair Karen Barwick participated in Advocacy Day in Montgomery! Then, a few days later.....
– Beverly Williams

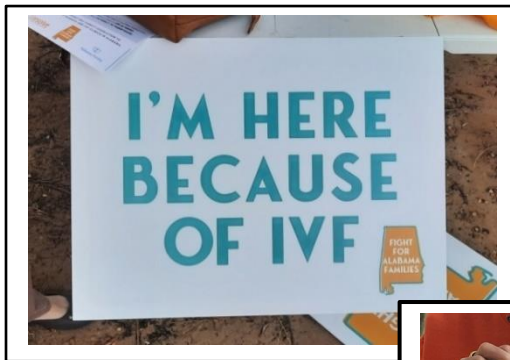
Alabama governor signs IVF bill giving immunity to patients and providers

UPDATED MARCH 6, 2024 10:56 PM ET, By Liz Baker Debbie Elliott Susanna Capelouto

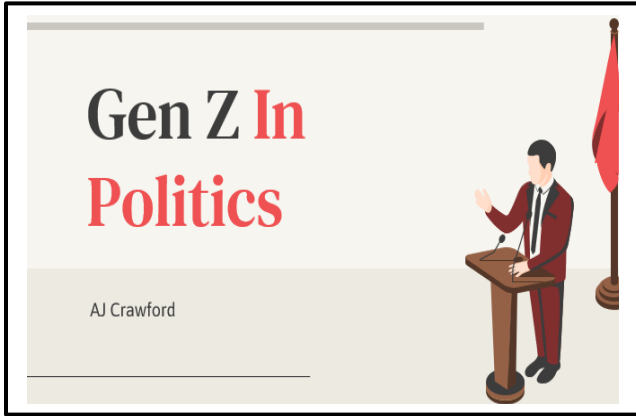
Public outrage over court ruling put pressure on lawmakers

State legislators moved quickly to pass a bill that would allow IVF treatments to resume after intense criticism and outcry from patients, parents, and medical professionals.

"They're hearing us loud and clear that this affects Alabama families," says Corinn O'Brien, with the Fight for Alabama Families Coalition. She's one of hundreds of advocates who have been lobbying at the statehouse, and says that effort- plus over 20 thousand emails- ramped up pressure on Alabama lawmakers to take action. See <https://www.npr.org/2024/03/06/1235907160/alabama-lawmakers-pass-ivf-immunity-legislation>



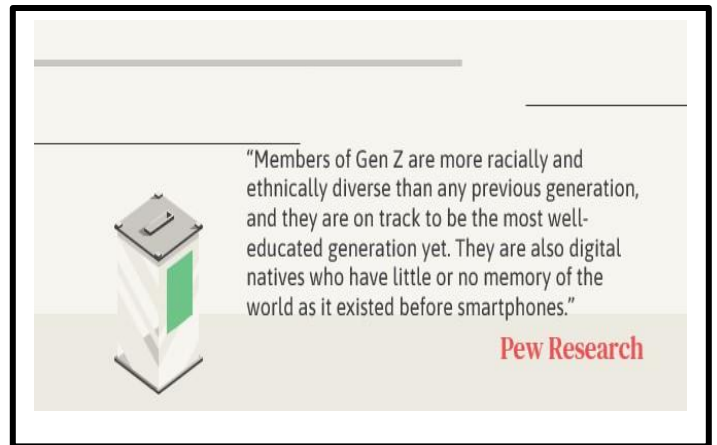
This photo with Karen Barwick, upper left, was in the WAPO!!



JSU College Democrats President AJ Crawford



We were delighted to have AJ Crawford, president of the JSU College Democrats, speak to our March meeting about young voters in politics. Specifically, she talked about Gen Z, which the U.S. Census defines as the youngest generation of adults, born between 1997 and 2012. She focused on their characteristics as a group, their world view, and their priorities. One key fact is that this group may constitute up to 41M voters in 2024 – a huge number. The total vote for both Biden and Trump in 2020 was 155M. So, Gen Z could account for over a quarter of the total number of votes cast. That makes these voters important to understand. Three key facts about this group are likely to shape their impact. First is their concern with inflation. The cost of living is too high. Over half see the cost of living as a barrier to success. More than half don't have enough savings to cover 3 months' expenses in an emergency. Almost three quarters have modified their lifestyle because of inflation. And rent consumes almost a third of their income. Overall, they are satisfied with their work/life balance but can't afford to buy a house. They also see this as the legacy of their predecessors. Second, they have a different view of immigration from many older adults. Many either are immigrants or have family members and friends who are. Twenty-nine percent are immigrant or first-generation citizens, and almost half are non-white. Seventy percent think the government should do more but definitely don't approve of closing the border and harsh policies. Finally, they see the two-party system as stagnant, with both candidates for President 'old white guys.' The 'ideal candidate' would be 'relatable,' 'well spoken,' and 'open to new ideas.' As a result, members of Gen Z want and need change.



Slides are available for AJ's entire presentation. Email [calcodem2019@gmail](mailto:calcodem2019@gmail.com) if you would like a copy ☺ -- Jim Williams

Nathan Young - A Geeky Autistic Young Man with Incredible Talents

-- Beverly Williams

Nathan was the speaker at the April CalCoDem Meeting. It wasn't one of our most well attended meetings - possibly, the topic frightened some. Those in attendance were highly impressed and I heard more than one person say ".... that's the best presentation we've ever had."

Nathan Young - a disability and Autism advocate. Nathan writes, runs social media, does podcasts, creates presentations, and does photography and videography work on his website Geek Alabama. On the Geek Alabama site, he does everything from geeky/nerdy talk, news talk, politics talk, events coverage, reviews, recipes, community coverage, promotions, charity coverage, music coverage, disability coverage, and many more topics. He has also been featured with articles and interviews on many TV shows, movies, and shows on streaming services.

Nathan has covered numerous highly regarded events in Alabama, Georgia, and around the country and has taken thousands of pictures and videos that are shared widely on social media. And on social media, Nathan has a great number of followers that enjoys his latest updates including new posts, pictures, videos, podcasts, and more.



Nathan was featured on the A&E TV show "The Employables" in 2019. Nathan is on the Autism Spectrum and is often looked upon for advice and thoughts from many in the disability community. **It was an excellent production** - Please watch it here <https://www.aetv.com/shows/the-employables/season-1/episode-3>



Among the coverage on Geek Alabama he provides, Nathan enjoys road geeking, train geeking, cooking, watching cartoons, and pets/animals. Nathan is also a major road and infrastructure geek. His major talent is drawing roads. [#Aspie](#) proud! [#ASD](#)

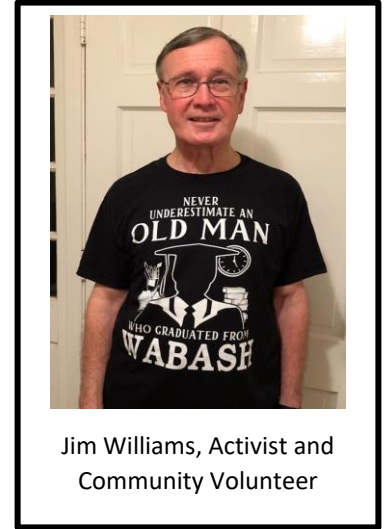
Watch the entire presentation here: [Click Here to Watch](#)

It's amazing that he's made it this far, largely on his own - and yet he isn't a 'bitter' person - he just tells it like it is. I'm thinking he has a bright future contributing to our community!

The 2024 Elections – Making a Difference in a Pivotal Time

Among the 15-20% of people that regularly pay any attention to politics, almost all believe that the 2024 elections will be among **the most important in our lifetime**. Many believe these elections will be THE most important elections in our lifetime.

There are several reasons. Foremost is the grave threat that a strong, pro-authoritarian movement – widely embraced by the GOP – poses. Former President Donald Trump embodies and is the focus of much of this concern, However the danger reaches far beyond him. At all levels of government, we see people trying to consolidate power at any cost and reducing or restricting rightful exercises of Constitutional rights. Avoiding a descent into authoritarianism requires ongoing resistance. It also means putting and retaining people in office who believe in and will protect our constitutional order.



While this concern applies at all levels, **a major focus needs to be at the national level**. In the immediate future, this means looking to the Presidential election and Congressional elections. In practice, this means reelecting Joe Biden as President, keeping a Democratic majority in the Senate, and regaining a Democratic majority in the House of Representatives. Achieving this combination is by no means certain. In fact, one reputable organization projects that Democrats will likely lose the Senate and fail to gain control in the House. Still, these outcomes are by no means guaranteed. **Rather, they will depend on what voters and those who seek to preserve our democracy do between now and November 5.** Linked here are graphics for [Senate](#) and [House](#) showing key races across the nation that will decide the control of Congress for the next two years. In quite a few races, a very small percentage of votes cast will decide the outcome.

With GOP dominance in Alabama all but presumed, **what can we do as individuals and members of like-minded groups?** I'd offer that the opportunities are many and varied – with something within almost anyone's reach. Let me list a few kinds and highlight a couple.

Educate ourselves. One of the main complaints about Democrats' prospects is that the Good News in many key areas is buried and not felt by most people. Many of us simply don't have key facts at our fingertips. So, when questions arise, we're not able to answer them. Many sources are available with key points. One type I'd encourage people to use is free webinars. Here are a few slides from just one training session in a three-part series called All Aboard. [Sign up here](#) at your convenience.

Talk with others. There are definitely people who have no interest in changing their mind. **However, some may be swayed to consider change if they feel get new information in a friendly exchange.** This slide from another webinar gives steps in working to persuade someone to consider such change.

What we've accomplished: lowering costs and expanding access to health care.

Lowering Costs

- Lowered health care premiums by \$800 for millions.
- Cap insulin at \$35 for Medicare.
- Cap seniors out of pocket expenses at \$2k for Rx drugs.
- Now they are fighting to cap insulin and Rx costs for all Americans.

Expanding Access

- Getting more people health coverage than ever before, with a record low uninsurance rate.
- A record 21 million people enrolled in ACA marketplaces this year.
- Expanding access to mental health care by requiring expanded coverage by insurers.

Protecting Women

- Called on Congress to pass federal bill protecting abortion and enshrining Roe v. Wade ensuring people in all 50 states have access to care they need.
- Signed 3 executive orders to strengthen access to reproductive health care.
- Includes access to emergency medical care, medicated abortion, and contraception.



Step 3: Draw a contrast with Trump on an issue that matters to you. What is different in a Biden-Harris world?

Healthcare

- 4 out of 5 people signing up on the Affordable Care Act can find health care coverage for \$10 a month or less.
- Over 16M Americans signed up for quality, affordable health coverage.
- \$2,000 per year cap on out-of-pocket prescription drug costs.
- \$35 monthly cap on insulin.

Economy

- 15 million new jobs created, w/ historically low unemployment rate at 3.7%.
- 17 states now have unemployment rates at or under 3%.

Infrastructure

- \$649 billion investment in 21st century industry like clean power and clean energy manufacturing.
- \$442.6 billion investment in public infrastructure, including bridges & roads.
- \$79.6 billion to provide affordable, high-speed internet with the Affordable Connectivity Program.



What's at risk: Trump will kick people off of their insurance.

Losing Coverage

- Over 45 million Americans benefiting from the ACA marketplace insurance and Medicaid expansion could lose their coverage
- 67 million seniors and people with disabilities, could lose the Medicare benefits they rely on.
- Black, Latino, AANHPI, and Native American uninsured rates would skyrocket.

Losing Access

- 150 million people will no longer be guaranteed free preventive care services like cancer screenings and annual check-ups.
- Millions of people could lose access to mental health care or substance use treatment.
- More than 58 million women, would be at risk of losing access to free birth control.

Higher Costs

- Americans relying on coverage from the ACA marketplace will have to pay thousands of dollars more each year.
- Over 100 million Americans with pre-existing conditions, could be denied coverage or charged thousands of dollars more
- Prescription drugs will skyrocket by hundreds of dollars each year for tens of millions of seniors.



How to draw a contrast with Trump.

On the Economy

Trump left office with the worst jobs record since Hoover. His Tax Scam gave handouts to the wealthy and big corporations while leaving the middle class behind.

Biden understands that middle-class life is too expensive right now. That is why he has passed laws to lower prescription drug costs, healthcare premiums, and energy costs. He will keep working every day to lower the cost of living, because he knows there is more work to do.

On Reproductive Freedom

Trump brags that he "was the one to kill Roe v. Wade" and said that women who get an abortion should be punished. Now, he's running on a national ban.

Biden is fighting to restore the protections of Roe v. Wade and will never allow a national abortion ban to become law. Biden believes women's reproductive health care decisions should be made by them and their doctors, not politicians

On Democracy and Extremism

Trump is running a campaign of revenge and retribution, promising to undermine our democracy and weaponize the government against his political enemies.

Biden is standing up to Trump and the extremists that threaten our democracy to ensure that our elections are free and fair.



Your path to effective conversations about our accomplishments has **four critical steps**:

Listen

Ask questions and listen with curiosity when a voter shares.

Share

Share the healthcare accomplishment that impacts you here.

Connect

Connect why this impacts you and why you care about this.

Check in

See how your voter is responding and make a plan to follow up.

Meet with others for mutual support. It's not unusual, upon meeting someone who learns your view on a topic or identification as a Democrat, to have them say 'I didn't know there were any other Democrats around here.' That sense of being alone and isolated easily become discouraging. For that reason, it's important to identify and at least occasionally meet – whether in person or virtually – with others who share your views. Besides our own monthly meetings, other, nearby opportunities exist. For example, we are always welcome at meetings of the **Talladega and Cleburne County Democrats**. Members of those groups also often attend our meetings and participate in our events. There are also other opportunities, such as the conference the **United Democratic Clubs of Alabama** held in Clanton on April 6. That drew people from across the state. Meetings of other, like-minded, nonpartisan groups are also extremely valuable. One example is **Alabama Arise**. Arise advocates statewide for policies that help lower-income people. Arise and many other advocacy organizations hold legislative days, as well as online and in-person meetings. These give people an opportunity to meet, learn, and work with others to achieve common goals.



Bradley Turner, Chair,
Cleburne County Democrats

Take direct action. There are many ways to help make a critical difference. Often success will result from tiny efforts of many people – not big actions of a few. For our local campaigns for county school board this fall, there will be **opportunities to canvass**. Direct engagement needn't be entirely local. Free opportunities abound to help individually through **phone banking, texting, and social media**. For those willing and able to pay for the postage, **writing and sending postcards** is a way to help make critical differences in key races across the country. Some of that starts with encouraging unregistered and infrequent voters to turn out for elections. Organizations like [Activate America](#) and [Postcards to Voters](#) almost always have several postcard campaigns in progress. By going to their sites, you can see what is available, how soon you need to mail cards, and why each campaign is important.

Donate. Major campaigns spend huge amounts of money, and few of us can participate in a major way. However, especially among progressive Democrats, their main funding comes from small, grassroots donations. Although a larger donation is always welcome, campaigns are quite happy to have very small, recurring donations. That kind of donation shows support. Popular support helps convince larger donors to give more. **Recurring donations also allows planning**. That often lets campaigns contract for media advertising when rates are lower than when a campaign tries to buy close to the election. Consider signing up for small, monthly donations through [ActBlue](#). ActBlue supports Democrats and many good causes across the nation. Thousands of small, \$5, \$10, and \$15 donations can easily make the difference in key races.

Remember: Democracy is not a spectator sport. And, as the very old saying goes,

'You may not be interested in politics, but politics is interested in you.'

Alabama Blue Conference 2024

-- Jim Williams

On April 6, the [United Democratic Clubs of Alabama \(UDCAL\)](#) sponsored The Alabama Blue Conference 2024: Voices, Values, Vision at Jefferson State Community College Chilton-Clanton Campus.



The all-day conference included several sessions, including a panel of young Democrats talking about what would motivate younger to engage in politics. Among topics that arose were concerns about reproductive rights. That included personal trauma coming from the Alabama Supreme Court's decision disrupting IVG. Others told of having to undergo an abortion as a lifesaving measure.

Professor Adam Jortner of Auburn University then discussed "The Secret History of the Alabama Democratic Party." He noted the long history of the party as a bastion of white supremacy, in contrast to today's party. He also discussed the American Revolution's origins of related constitutional issues. A flight delay in Chicago prevented his co-presenter, Dr. Rolundus Rice of Tuskegee University from participating.



Following a box lunch, **Evan Milligan** spoke. Milligan was the main litigant in the redistricting case that led the US Supreme Court to force Alabama to redraw maps, creating the new 2d Congressional District as a competitive one. **LaTanya Millhouse** then talked about Alabama Democratic Women and the need to engage. Millhouse is the first Black president of the organization, formed in the mid-1980s, She is also a candidate for Alabama House District 52 in a special election.

The conference ended with a special session with Representative Marilyn Lands, who won a special election for Alabama House District 10. Lands' victory drew national attention as she flipped a district that had been held by Republicans for over a decade. Lands won 62% of the vote. Lands campaigned heavily on reproductive rights. She talked about her own experience of having an abortion in the past as a lifesaving measure. She wanted to protect medical treatment that was available 20 years ago.



At the very end of the conference, two people from [Read Freely Alabama](#) called attention to their table and information. They also urged people to contact their



legislators to opposed HB385, which could criminalize normal library practices. They also called for signing a [letter to the Alabama Public Library Services board](#) opposing interference with local library boards.

After the conference ended, about 20 people held an informal gathering and discussion at a local restaurant. That gave an excellent opportunity for people to meet and talk with others they hadn't necessarily known or met before. The overwhelming impression was that this conference was a great success, and many look forward to another conference next year.

Alabama Arise Legislative Day 2024

--Jim Williams



On April 2, Calhoun County Democrats Beverly and Jim Williams were delighted to be part of [Alabama Arise's](#) 2024 legislative day. This was held at the Alabama Statehouse. Over 270 people registered and at least 240 attended. Senator Kirk Hatcher and Representative Mary Moore – both of Montgomery – gave opening remarks. Advocates on key issues then briefed on the key topics. The main topic, as in the past several years, was **closing the healthcare gap (Medicaid expansion)**. This gap includes ~300,000 citizens without health insurance. The uncompensated costs of providing essential care to many of these people puts ~ 80% of our hospitals operating in the red and at risk of closure. Contrary to arguments that the state can't afford expansion, the influx of federal money combines with lower costs to the state by shifting some costs to Medicaid and eliminating high medical costs for treating illness and injuries that are preventable. Expansion would **also create upwards of 30,000 new jobs** and have a huge multiplier effect as the additional money flows through Alabama's economy. Improved access to healthcare would also improve Alabama's very low workforce participation rate. Alabama ranks among the 5 states with the lowest rate nationally. Untreated illness or medical conditions resulting from that are one of the top 3 barriers to employment. Improved healthcare access would also improve Alabama's shorter life expectancy and improve our among-worst infant and maternal mortality rates. **Arise is the core member of the Cover Alabama coalition that has worked for Medicaid expansion for several years.**

Another topic covered was **the need to accept federal funding for the summer lunch program**. Alabama is one of 14 states that refused federal money for this program. **As a result, about 545,000 Alabama children will miss meals this summer.** The \$15M the state would receive from for this program would create about \$100M in economic activity, benefiting all of Alabama's citizens.

Funding public transportation was also discussed. Lack of transportation is another of the top-3 barriers to workforce participation. A constitutional amendment in the 1950s pushed by road contractors prohibits using gas tax revenue for anything but roads and bridges. As a result, Alabama's public transportation is woefully inadequate. **In 2018 the legislature created the Public Transportation Trust Fund (PTTF). However, no money has gone into that fund.** One proposal is to add a \$5 fee to each vehicle tag renewal. That would generate about

\$25M, but the leveraging impact for federal funding would create about \$100M. That would be enough to make radical improvements in coverage and service.

One other topic was a **bill that seeks to limit the ability of companies that receive state or local incentives to allow voluntary unions in their facilities or their subcontractors**. Under federal law, there are two paths to unionizing. One is collecting enough signatures in favor of having a union to require a secret election. The other is to have 50% or more of employees sign a card authorizing a union to represent them. [SB231](#) would prohibit the latter path and would penalize companies that allow this type of action by locate and not preventing companies from complying with federal law by punishing them for allowing voluntary unionizing by making the company ineligible for an economic development incentive. **This restriction seems to be in direct conflict with federal law and almost certain to be lost in court. However, it reflects a broad, anti-union sentiment within Alabama.**



After the briefings and a brown-bag lunch, **attendees went around the statehouse to meet with as many of our legislators as possible to urge them to take action**. People reconvened for a press conference and reports by people who had met with their legislator. The day closed out with a short meeting of Arise Alabama Action to approve a budget and elect board and executive committee members.

We strongly encourage all Calhoun County Democrats to contact our state legislators and urge them to act on these issues.

SB1 – handling of absentee ballot applications & the politics of voter suppression

-- Jim Williams

On March 20, Gov. Ivey signed [Senate Bill 1](#). This restricted handling of absentee ballot applications and imposed criminal penalties for some acts related to them. The bill became effective immediately. Many organizations that promote voter participation opposed this bill. Many people see SB1 as a voter suppression measure. The justification was the false narrative of widespread voter fraud. With the upcoming election, it's important to understand what the final bill did and didn't do.

The final bill dropped a provision that made it especially toxic for people wanting to assure that all people eligible to vote do so. The original bill criminalized even giving a blank absentee voter application to someone. This provision was ridiculous in some respects because anyone with internet access and a printer can [download and print a copy from the Secretary of State's website](#). The practical effect would have been to create an unnecessary obstacle to people who don't have internet and a printer, and who would have trouble traveling to the board of elections office to get a hard copy. The final bill lets people make and distribute copies of the application as long as NOTHING IS FILLED IN except indicating what election the application is for.

One key exception remains: The bill prohibits anyone who is PAID OR RECEIVES A GIFT from "distributing, ordering, requesting, collecting, completing, prefilling, obtaining, or delivering a voter's absentee ballot application." Violating this provision is a Class C felony. Knowingly paying or giving a gift to someone to do any of these things is a Class B felony.

No one but the voter can return a completed application in person. Otherwise, the voter may return the application: via the US Postal Service or via a commercial carrier. There are narrow exceptions for some medical situations and for some people called up to respond for emergencies the governor declares.

The law does allow people with certain conditions to have someone help them complete their application. These conditions are "blindness, disability, or inability to read or write." However, that person CANNOT be "the voter's employer or agent of that employer or officer or agent of the voter's union."

None of SB1's measures apply to active-duty military and voters overseas.

The main effect – intended or not – has probably been to create confusion and fear about absentee voting. This is consistent with the Big Lie that Donald Trump and MAGA Republicans have spread. It helps discourage voter turnout, which MAGA world sees as in its interests. So, it is up to people who want to see everyone who has the right to vote do so to have the correct information and act accordingly.

[On April 4, a broad coalition of civil rights, voting rights and disability rights groups sued](#) the Alabama Attorney General, Alabama's 42 District Attorneys, and the Secretary of State to block enforcement. The organizations representing the whole coalition are the "Campaign Legal Center (CLC), Legal Defense Fund (LDF), Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), the American Civil Liberties Union of Alabama (ACLU-AL), and Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program (ADAP)."

Former Calhoun County District Judge Larry F. Warren said that **"the legal action seems to have two prongs. One is the barrier to vote for disabled people under the 14th Amendment. This is similar to the poll tax. The second is a freedom of speech violation. This is similar to Justice Alito's Citizen United case where corporations' right to voter expression would be a denial of freedom of speech. These are excellent grounds to have SB1 declared unconstitutional."** Warren also noted that the lawsuit was unusual in being filed in the Northern District of Alabama in Birmingham, rather than as customary in the Middle District in Montgomery. This may suggest an effort to get a more favorable hearing. He also noted that the bill contained no severance clause. That means that a ruling against any part of the law would invalidate the entire law.

Remember: 'Your vote is your voice.'

Ladies,
JOIN US SATURDAY,
APRIL 20, FROM 10 - 12

CalCoDem HQ, 812 Noble Street,
Anniston, AL 36201

PAINT & SIP
Party

FREE
FOOD
AND
DRINKS

ENTRY \$15 CASH OR CHECK
Make checks payable to: **Donna Kelly**
and bring to class OR mail to CalCoDems,
PO Box 563, Jacksonville, AL 36265
All painting supplies included

Seating is limited

RSVP NLT April 15th to:
Bettye Presley, 256-405-8336 Sheila Gilbert, 256-310-0955
presleybetty@yahoo.com sgilbert1111@gmail.com

Sponsored by the Calhoun County Democrats

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Paint & Sip

We had a great time Saturday at the Paint & Sip Party hosted by the Calhoun County Democratic Committee!

DonnaRenee facilitated our group of diverse and talented women as we painted and snacked with OLD friends and NEW friends at CalCoDem HQ!

Please enjoy the video and JOIN US next time! Stay in touch :)

Watch the video of the event to see MORE photos here: <https://youtu.be/117t3zjbhAk>

Carsie's 'famous' cookies!

