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Want to get involved with the journal?
Contact us at MobileBayLaborJournal01@gmail.com

We are now releasing every other month
Expect the next issue on July 1st

MUTUAL

AID

CLASSIFIEDS

Do you have extra insulation, foam boards, solar panels, or air conditioning units? The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Mobile is installing an outdoor food donation and pickup closet. They would like to eventually be able to have this closet be temperature controlled. If you have these items available to donate, email MobileBayLaborJournal01@gmail.com

Do you have skills and materials that could help finish the Queer Sanctuary? Mobile Alabama Mutual Aid (MAMA) needs help finishing their Queer Sanctuary, which is going to be a transitional housing space for people in our community. They need help an electrician to run some plugs. Most of the wiring is done, they just need help finishing. They also need help finishing drywall, which is pretty far along. Supplies that could help - pavers, bricks, and 450 sq ft of matching tile.

The future we want will come when we learn how to give help to the world without hurting ourselves - and when we learn how to accept the help given to us by community and by the earth, without destroying either.

Do you have an extra Miter Saw? The Lower Alabama Native Plant Society is looking for a Miter Saw to help them build seed starting tables for their free plant distribution initiatives. The Miter Saw would also help them with building infrastructure like benches and gazebos on lands they help manage. If you have a Miter Saw to donate, email MobileBayLaborJournal01@gmail.com

Are you good at installing metal roofing? We are looking for someone to teach a community of volunteers how to install metal roofing. Supplies will be provided. We will learn through practice, installing a roof on the house of Jeff Ramsey. This will help Jeff complete his home, where he intends to do free oil changes for the public. Jeff works for an electricians workers cooperative. He also helps out with mutual aid projects in his neighborhood. He has helped organize free brake light changing events. He is also running for the Alabama Public Service Commission to help make sure that the working class has a chance of breaking up the chokehold Alabama Power has on our communities. Once his home is complete, he plans to host many community events and mutual aid projects, especially related to mechanic work. If you want to help put a metal roof on Jeff's house, email MobileBayLaborJournal01@gmail.com

Build an infrastructure of mutual care so thorough, thoughtful, and holistic that we no longer need to rely on the capitalist system.

DON'T FEEL LIKE CELEBRATING AMERICA THIS YEAR?

You Are Not Alone.

Instead, come celebrate people in our community who are doing the work of caring for each other at:

MUTUAL AID CELEBRATION DAY

On July 4th

From 10 am to 4pm,

Hosted by Mobile Alabama Mutual Aid.

Message (251) 525-0051 to RSVP and receive the address.

10:00 AM	Mingle and meet each other.
10:30 AM	Welcome and Introduction of activities.
10:45 AM	Panel on Mutual Aid Logistics
11:30 AM	Potluck Lunch! (Contact 509-380-2466 for allergy alerts)
12:15 PM	Play Organizer! A game made to teach mutual aid through fun and play.
1:00 PM	Mutual Aid Roundtable! Share your project!
1:45 PM	Outdoor Game!
2:30 PM	Extra Time!
3:15 PM	Clean up and wind down.

We want this event to be accessible to everyone! To facilitate this, please avoid wearing incense, perfumes, or essential oils, and please, Stay Home If You Are Sick!!!

**This is a sober event, all ages are welcome.
Feel free to bring outdoor games to play!**

JOHNNY BOWMAN DID NOTHING WRONG

Article By Gracchus

Art By HollyRose Baker & Gracchus

In the early hours of Jan. 4, two Semmes police officers entered Bowman's Auto Air, allegedly responding to a suspected robbery. Approaching the large sheet metal building, they located a cut padlock below an open door and proceeded inside. They weaved through broken down cars and stacks of boxes, going room to room casually announcing their presence. Just before concluding their search of the building, they located a camper in the shop's garage. It was clear that there was a man inside the camper wearing an oxygen mask and slowly moving about. The man turned on a light, cracked open the camper door, and the quiet of the small hours of that Sunday morning was shattered by a sudden and quick cacophony which, despite its quickness, would echo for the next four months. A flurry of gunshots erupted inside the building, leaving Johnny Bowman Jr. bleeding out on the floor.

Nearly two hours later, Mr. Bowman was brought to a hospital, having suffered five gunshot wounds and heavy blood loss. The transcripts of the six 9-1-1 calls made that night paint the picture of a man fighting for his life. "They shot first! And I've got this guy out here yelling at me. And I'm bleeding out. I'm just trying to get help, man. They shot first!" The responding officers called for backup, including the sheriff's department and a SWAT team, claiming that it was unsafe to reenter the building. Semmes Police Chief Todd Freind claims the officers made the right call and that it was unclear whether or not Mr. Bowman posed a threat to the officers. Meanwhile, Mr. Bowman was on the phone begging for help, telling the operator that he was unable to move without worsening his bleeding. "I have no harmful intent to these police officers whatsoever! None!" Mr. Bowman continued to fight for his life in the hospital while the city of Semmes attempted damage control.

I HAVE
NO HARMFUL
INTENT
TO THESE
POLICE OFFICERS
WHATSOEVER

—
JOHNNY
BOW
MAN
JR

Several Semmes City Council meetings became heated forums for citizens to voice their support for Mr. Bowman and decry the lack of transparency by the city. Following one such exchange, the city issued a last minute cancellation of a regular session of the council scheduled for March 17. That meeting was rescheduled for the following Thursday, March 19. It is notable that city council meetings are typically held at 5:30p, but the reschedule was to be held at 10:30a instead. One local organizer took to Facebook to accuse Mayor Brandon Van Hook of issuing the last minute notice in an attempt to disrupt efforts by citizens to call for accountability during the work session. Mayor Van Hook did not respond to the allegation.

Early reports of the incident largely omitted his life threatening injuries and several surgeries, instead highlighting officer Brandon Murphy, who was grazed on his lower back. Neither officer Murphy nor the other responding officer were put on administrative leave or had charges filed against them. In response to mounting criticism by citizens, the city defended the actions of the officers, including the delayed medical attention, by pointing out that Bowman's Auto Air is a commercial building, meaning that nobody should be in the building late at night, much less asleep. City attorney Jacob Fuller claimed that the bodycam footage of the incident would answer many questions that were being asked, but stopped short of endorsing calls by citizens to release the footage. According to Mr. Fuller, the footage could not be legally released until after grand jury determinations.

Mr. Bowman claims that he was unaware that the men shining flashlights and making noise in his shop at 3am were police officers, and that the officers fired first. He says that he had his .22 caliber pistol only for self defense. His attorney maintains both unlawful entry and misconduct on the part of Semmes police. The officers claim that they had the right to enter the building under exigent circumstances, did thoroughly announce themselves, and that Mr. Bowman, despite warnings, fired the first shot that night.

On March 24, the bodycam footage was released to NBC15 News following a decision by the Mobile Grand Jury. The Grand Jury declined to charge either Semmes police or Mr. Bowman, citing that both parties acted reasonably. Upon viewing the footage, it is unclear what questions Mr. Fuller thought it could answer. Officers do announce themselves several times throughout the building, but if Mr. Bowman was asleep, which he was, it is perfectly reasonable to assume that he may not have heard them. It is unclear in the released footage whether Semmes police fired first. Chief Freind is quoted by NBC15 as saying, "We've got the video we know everything that happened went right." There is no mention in the report by NBC15 of the delayed medical care. Rather, there is a focus on how Mr. Bowman does not own the camper that he was sleeping in and that he wasn't supposed to be there to begin with. Readers can view the raw footage of the incident on NBC15's YouTube channel, mynbc15.

Mr. Bowman's attorneys have now filed a civil suit against the city of Semmes and the individual officers, claiming unlawful entry and use of excessive, deadly force by Semmes police. The suit states that Mr. Bowman did not fire or point his weapon at police, nor did he flee. Additionally, officers did not attempt to deescalate the situation. Instead of identifying themselves and ordering Mr. Bowman to drop his weapon, one officer shouted "He has a gun!" and then both officers fired several shots into the camper before running away. The suit also highlights that another employee was asleep in the shop and was not awoken until shots were fired, reinforcing Mr. Bowman's claim that he was unaware who was in his shop that night.



Despite some uncertainties that still remain regarding some aspects of this case, one narrative still remains objectively true. Semmes city police shot a man on his own property five times and denied him medical attention for nearly two hours while he bled out and begged 9-1-1 operators for help. Chief Freind would like you to believe that the city and the police department are the real victims of this ordeal, and that what the public heard prior to the release of body cam footage is the "wrong side of the story."

Law enforcement has to be held accountable for their mistakes. Sweeping things under the rug doesn't make them go away, instead they fester, rot, and stink, leaving dark stains that take much more effort to remove. The malaise of poor judgement and corruption cannot be ignored for long before it starts to turn your stomach. As citizens it is our responsibility to hold our governing institutions and their officers accountable, even if they refuse to hold themselves so. To do otherwise is to effectively abandon society and each other to the whims of a handful of powerful individuals. In the same vein, the media must also be held accountable for the ways and means by which information is presented.

Several local news outlets would like you to focus on irrelevant minutiae such as who owned the camper, or how the property is classified. These same local outlets will twist their language in subtle ways so that obvious facts become obscured. Mr. Bowman was not taken to the hospital dying, instead the sheriffs "got Mr. Bowman out." He wasn't denied medical care, instead police underwent "several hours of negotiation" to end the supposed standoff. Even many of the headlines were intentionally biased, calling it a shootout or highlighting the officer "hit" (i.e. grazed). Yet, one salient fact remains. Johnny Bowman Jr. did nothing wrong, he followed the law and acted reasonably.

**IF A COP CAN
SHOOT YOU
FOR NO REASON,
YOU DONT HAVE
ANY RIGHTS.**



THE PURGING OF DEMOCRACY.

By Saracennia Bogart

Its not uncommon for voters in Mobile to arrive at their poling place and be turned away. Many voters are purged from the rolls just before the election. Others show up to find that their poling location has changed, and are told to drive across town for the chance to vote. In the last mayoral election, at least one voter was told to go vote at another polling station at an elementary school - the only problem was, the name he was given for the school didn't match any school or polling location in Mobile County. He was stuck driving around to different polling locations, trying in vain to cast a ballot.

Ultimately, we, the people subject to the rules of the government, have little say over those rules. We don't get to choose who runs for office. We don't get to choose where we vote. We don't get to choose which parties are on the ballot, or what they stand for, which referendums we get to vote on, or how they are worded.

We are given a few, narrow choices, often preselected for us. Occasionally, we are lucky enough that someone genuine throws their hat in the ring- but they are usually beaten out of the race or beaten into submission. And now, the state of Alabama is working to take even those few choices away. They have threatened to remove our ability to vote for Public Service Commissioner, just as people from around the state seek to run and replace the corrupt members of that board who are selling away our greatest natural treasures.

This country has always worked to keep those it wished to oppress from voting. Here, in Alabama, generations of activists undertook a diversity of tactics - civil disobedience, legal argument, legislative proposals, armed resistance - to ensure that they would have the right to vote. Now, manydescendants of that same Black Civil Rights movement find themselves turned away from the the same polling stations as their parents and grandparents.

Upcoming State Elections: Will You Even Be Allowed to Vote?

2026 Primary Election	May 19, 2026
2026 Primary Runoff Election	June 16, 2026
2026 General Election	November 3, 2026

Those most effected by the legal system - those who are captured and imprisoned by it - are often stripped of that right to vote, preventing them from even trying to enact any change that would keep others from falling to their fate of disenfranchisement.

We have few choices in this rigged game - but the fact that those in power work so hard to strip those few remaining choices away from us lets us know that they still see it as a vulnerability. The ballot box will not be the site of our liberation. But it is a place we go to choose our enemy - those of us who still have a choice. Who would you rather struggle under?

Unsure if you can vote with your conviction?
<https://www.aclualabama.org/rights-restoration/>

Wanna check if you have been purged yet?
<https://myinfo.alabamavotes.gov/VoterView>

NO
LOTTO?
NO
PROBLEM!

Why Progressives and Leftists Should be Against an Alabama Lottery

Article By Gracchus Art By Caroline Moran & Gracchus

The issue of a state lottery has been a perennial problem for Alabama. Every so often Montgomery tries to push forward new policies around gambling, which usually fall flat for various reasons. Sometimes it's private interests trying to maintain their monopoly on certain types of gambling, whether justly or unjustly, sometimes it's the religious right claiming to uphold Christian family values, and other times it's governmental squabbling over who gets what revenues. Rarely do progressive or leftist voices speak out in opposition, however. Usually, these are the proponents of gambling "reform" who believe it to be an adequate source of funding for schools, roads, rural hospitals, and whatever else one might imagine. Proponents point towards neighboring states, such as Florida and Mississippi, who have state lotteries and lack some of the budgetary woes that we often face here. Some even go as far as to claim that Alabama is losing vast amounts of revenue to its neighbors in scratch off sales. Initially, it would seem that lottery tickets are a common-sense progressive reform that should be enacted to catch up to our more advanced neighbors.



This year, there have been two bills in relation to a state lottery. Sen. Merika Coleman (D) has introduced SB-257, which is an expansive overhaul of Alabama's gaming regulations with a provision for a state lottery attached. Additionally, Rep. Phillip Ensler (D) has introduced the "Clean Lottery Act" in the house, which only provides for a state lottery. Rep. Ensler is quoted as saying that our state has "lagged behind in terms of finding new and stable sources of revenue" by Andrea Tinker (Alabama Reflector). Both bills would require amendments to the state constitution, meaning that they face significant hurdles and would ultimately fall to the people of the state for a final vote. While these bills have not advanced much through the legislative process, they have reignited the conversation about a state lottery among both voters and office-seekers across the state.

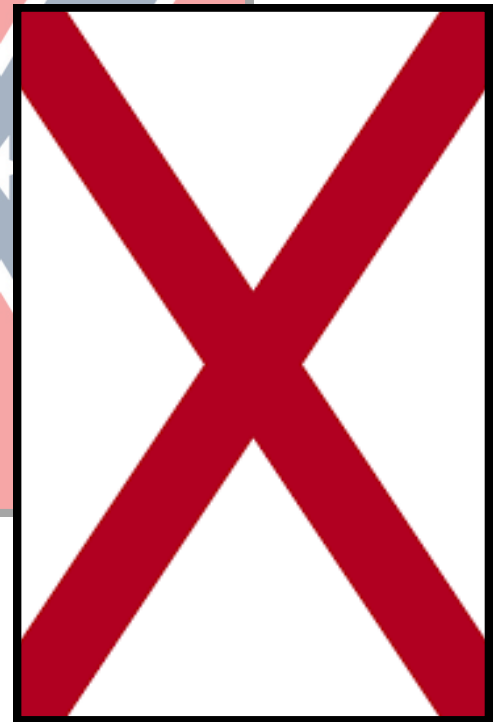
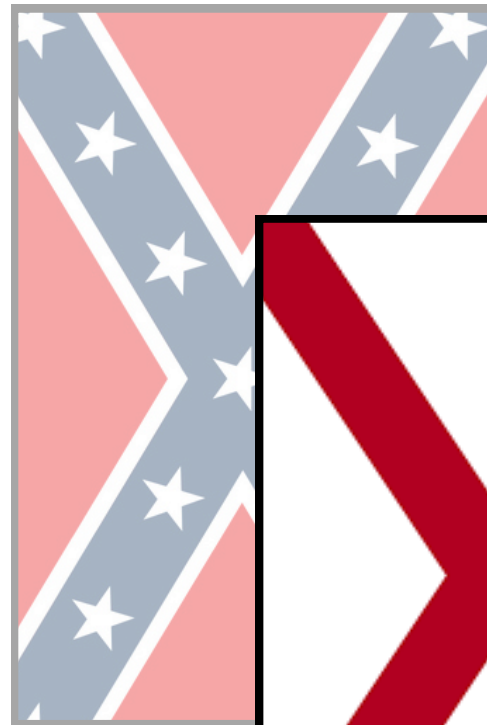
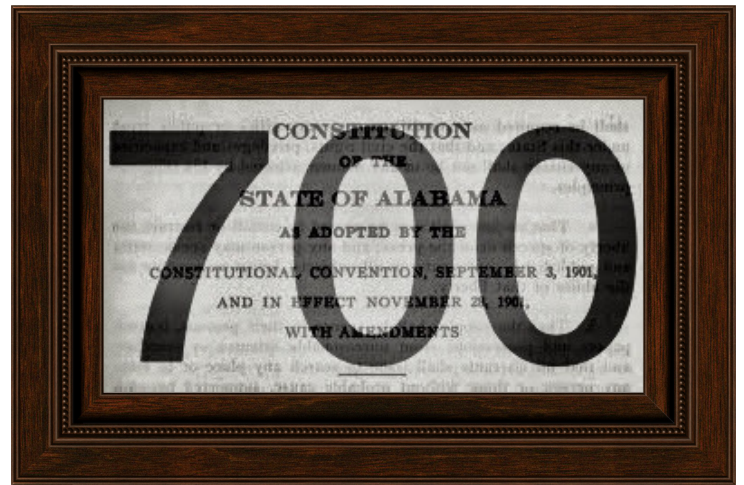


Neither bill, however, addresses the central issue which they are attempting to solve, or even recognizes the myriad of issues brought forth by state lotteries. The central issue at hand is Alabama's recurring budgetary crises, which are a result of inadequate and inconsistent state revenue streams. These crises often put our most essential services at risk of defunding and will be exacerbated in the coming years by severe reductions in federal funding, which Alabama is mostly reliant on. The solution to these recurring crises is not a state lottery, which is essentially a tax on poverty, but rather a complete overhaul of the antiquated, regressive, and classist tax system enshrined in our state constitution.

The World's Longest Constitution

In order to understand Alabama's budgetary woes we must first look at the state's tax system, as taxes are typically a government's primary source of revenue. Our tax system, which by several objective measures is a regressive one, is primarily laid out in the state constitution. The current constitution was adopted in November of 2022 and is a recompilation of the 1901 constitution. A recompilation is not a rewriting, but rather an update with slight adjustments. The goals of this recompilation was to drop racist language and redundant laws that were unenforceable, drop provisions which were repetitive or null, and to reorganize and consolidate many sections to make the document more streamlined and readable. In other words, the 2022 recompilation was primarily an administrative endeavor. While the language and most egregious provisions of the 1901 Jim Crow constitution were deleted or revised, the overall intent of the document was largely left in place.

The intent of the 1901 constitution was to reconsolidate political power among the white industrialists, financiers, and the old planter aristocracy after the attempted reforms of the Reconstruction Era following the Civil War. By the time the constitutional convention of 1901 took place, many Reconstruction era policies had been abandoned by the federal government, opening political space for the old ruling elites to reimpose a system of racial segregation and disenfranchisement, which became known as Jim Crow. The primary source of power for the white ruling class throughout the South was, and still is, land ownership, which was never fully addressed before the end of Reconstruction. In fact, many would argue that the federal government's reluctance towards radical redistribution of land throughout the former Confederate States (those which seceded from the Union during 1860-1861) is one of the primary reasons for the failure of Reconstruction. It is no coincidence that our state constitution limits the ability of both the state and local governments to tax land, especially large tracts of agricultural land.



The single largest problem with Alabama's constitution is its overcentralization of power at the state level, which deprives local governments of their ability to effectively govern. This overcentralization is the primary mechanism by which the state government has limited both the development and political power of majority black counties and municipalities, as well as stifled anything resembling progressive politics in the state. The Alabama constitution operates on what is known as Dillon's Rule, under which a general grant of home rule for counties and municipalities is absent from the state constitution. This means that the state legislature must specifically grant local governments permissions or powers which are not directly spelled out in the state constitution through either an official act, which is voted on by the legislature, or a constitutional amendment, which is voted on by both the legislature and then the state electorate. The only authorities vested with limited home rule are school boards, economic development districts, water authorities, gas districts, hospital boards, and other "similar" public authorities, but notably not municipal corporations (i.e. cities, towns, and counties).

In practice, this means that the 1901 state constitution has been amended 700 times, with nearly a third of those amendments only applying to a single county or municipality, according to Encyclopedia of Alabama. In fact, the current constitution has 37 full pages solely devoted to Mobile County. Amendment 351 of the state constitution allows for Mobile county to enact a small tax for pest control; now just think about that for a moment. That amendment had to be read for three consecutive days in the legislature, passed by a $\frac{2}{3}$ vote, and then passed by a simple majority statewide. Voters in Madison County had a say in whether our local government was allowed to collect taxes within its own jurisdiction to control mosquitos 362 miles away from their ballot boxes. Montgomery doesn't always need to rely on constitutional amendments to protect the wealthy interests of the state. Some might remember that back in 2016 the Birmingham City Council voted to raise the city's minimum wage.

In response, the state legislature worked overtime to pass the "Uniform Minimum Wage and Right to Work Act" which prevents any such action by local governments. If the moneyed interests of Montgomery set themselves against something, it will most assuredly die before it sees the light of day. Yet, nowhere is the purpose of this insanity more obvious than the provisions on property and income taxes.

Land Over Liberty

Overall, Alabama's tax system is one of the most regressive in the nation. According to the Alabama Arise Tax and Budget Handbook (2026 ed.), it is an upside down system which puts the burden of taxation squarely on the shoulders of those of us who have the lowest incomes. For example, the lowest paid fifth of the state pays nearly 12% of their income in state and local taxes while the wealthiest 1% pay around 5.4% of their income. This is in large part due to our state's nearly flat income taxes and, quite frankly classist, property tax. Both of these taxes are defined in the state constitution and can only be changed by constitutional amendments.

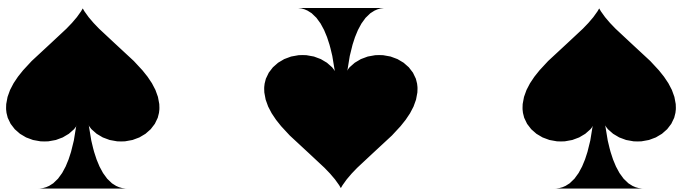
Alabama's three income tax rates are the same as when they were enacted in 1935. Taxable income of \$500 is at 2%, from there to \$3,000 is at 4%, and anything above \$3,000 is at 5%. Taxable income begins for a single individual at \$4,000 yearly adjusted gross income. According to Alabama Arise, a two-parent family of four begins to be taxed at \$13,500, far lower than in Mississippi (\$19,600) or Georgia (\$32,000). On average, the lowest income families in Alabama pay 1.9% of their income in taxes, while nationally such families typically pay less than 0% when factoring in available refundable tax credits. The top 1% of Alabama families pay only an average of 2.9% of their income in taxes, while nationally these families pay an average of 4.1%. Income taxes in Alabama are further distorted by the federal income tax (FIT) deduction, which allows for taxpayers to deduct their federal income taxes from their state income taxes. It is estimated that Alabama loses \$1.26 billion per year to the FIT deduction, which is mostly taken advantage of by wealthy households.

The fact that our income tax rates cap out at extremely low levels is a slap in the face to working families. To top that off, the standard deduction of \$3,000 that the state affords is far below what the standard federal deduction is, and is not tied to inflation. This means that every year the standard deduction reduces in value, especially when megalomaniac presidents drive inflation harder and harder to pump value from the stock market. Every year, working families have the value of their tax breaks reduced while the rich get breaks, loopholes, and exemptions as if they need them. Tax breaks should be targeted towards those who have the least to alleviate the pressures of poverty, but in Alabama they are scattershot policies that seem to benefit the working class, but whose value is routinely abused by the wealthiest in the state.

Added on to this is our property tax system, which as stated before was explicitly designed to protect the power of wealthy landowners post-Reconstruction. The property tax is somewhat unique in several ways. Firstly, it predates both sales and income taxes in Alabama, and in most societies more generally. Secondly, it is primarily a source of local tax revenues. Thirdly, a majority of local property taxes are earmarked to go towards funding the education system. Finally, Alabama citizens pay the lowest combined state and local property taxes in the country. As noted by Alabama Arise, the average property tax collection rate could double in our state and still be below the national average. While on first reading a proposed raising of property taxes might appear as a penalty to homeowners, it is possible to restructure Alabama's property tax system without doing so. Homeownership is an important element of building intergenerational wealth that also provides financial security in the short term. The target of restructuring should be agribusiness and timber companies with an additional goal of empowering local bodies to levy taxes as they see fit without interference from the state.

Amendment 373 of the state constitution, commonly known as the Lid Bill, establishes four classes of property which are taxed at different rates of fair market value. The lowest rate of 10% is assigned to Class 3, which is single-family owner-occupied residential property, historic buildings and sites, agricultural land, and timber acreage. The Lid Bill also stipulates absolute dollar limits on the amount which can be collected from various pieces of property. Class 3 properties are capped at 1% of value before applying the assessment rate, even if a larger amount could be taxed otherwise. In effect, this shields the vast majority of a property's value from being considered taxable. The obvious solution to this would then be for local bodies, which rely heavily on property taxes, to raise taxes, but the Lid Bill and other amendments impose an obtuse and convoluted system for doing so. This system involves a local referendum, passage by the state legislature, further passage by the Local Constitutional Amendment Commission (the governor, speaker of the house, presiding officer of the senate, attorney general, and secretary of state), and in some cases a statewide vote.

While the original purpose of the Lid Bill and similar legislation was to shield rural land near urban areas from sharp increases in property taxes resulting from commercial-urban development, it does far more to shield wealthy landowners from taxes today. Agricultural land is not differentiated by size, meaning that large industrial farms and timberland receive the same tax breaks as small family farms. As noted by Alabama Arise, nearly 60% of timberland in Alabama is owned by individuals or entities which reside outside of the county where the land is located and the share of foreign-owned farmland in the state is twice the national average. Our natural wealth is being extracted and concentrated in a small minority of wealthy landowners and corporations while the localities that are being extracted from must suffer underfunded schools and a collapsing rural healthcare system. The combined constitutional restrictions on our broken income and property tax systems leave local bodies, and the state at large, with only one easy solution to budgetary gaps.



Sales taxes, unlike income and property taxes, are not defined in the state constitution and may be raised or lowered by the legislature. Municipalities may raise, and in some cases lower, sales taxes as they see fit, notably without the requirement of a hearing or vote. Counties may only raise sales taxes to fund schools. The result of this is that our state is heavily reliant on sales taxes, especially at the local level, to fund many essential programs and services. Sales and excise taxes (taxes on specific goods) make up nearly half of the yearly state revenue, but are also inconsistent. The amount of sales taxes generated declines whenever consumer spending does so as well. This means that essential services may face budgetary constraints during times of economic hardship, when they are most needed.

It should be noted that sales taxes, or any tax on consumption, disproportionately affect lower-income, working class families as the tax is the same from one individual to the next regardless of their income. In other words, Alabama's combined average sales tax of 9% is paid the same whether someone makes \$20,000 or \$200,000 per year, and those who make less will pay a larger share of their income. That combined average of 9% is one of the highest in the nation. Additionally, Alabama sales taxes are confined mostly to goods and entertainment, excluding many luxury services that are utilized by the wealthy, such as interior design.

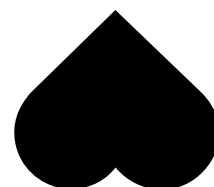
This is by no means a complete and exhaustive analysis of Alabama's regressive tax system, it barely scratches the surface. For a more complete and in-depth analysis, readers would do well to examine the Alabama Arise Tax and Budget Handbook (2026 ed.), which is available for free download on their website and has been instrumental in writing this article. What is laid out here is a basic, working understanding of the major causes of our state's budgetary woes and who benefits from the inefficiencies of our state constitution. Many organizations and legal scholars point towards an overhaul of the tax system as it stands in the constitution, or even a complete rewriting of the state constitution, as a solution.

Lawmakers, on the other hand, have repeatedly proposed to simply plaster over the system with amendments providing for a lottery, while leaving the underlying rot in place. Not only does this shy away from addressing the real systemic issues of our state, but it also comes with its own set of problems which disproportionately affect those who are intentionally disadvantaged by the constitution.



A Victimless Vice?

“Wine, Beer, Lotto” is the de facto slogan plastered across many gas stations and corner stores throughout America. For many, it is a red lettered sign of hope, a chance to win, but in the shadows of those neon words, a fruitless system of continuous loss and desperation exists. The simple fact is that well-off people are far less likely to play the lottery compared to the lowest income households. Lottery systems, particularly scratch-off cards, are mostly appealing to people as a chance to “win big”, spending just a dollar or two to escape poverty. Despite this, the old adage holds true. The house always wins. Like all gambling, lottery systems cannot exist if they give away more money than they take in.



An investigation by the Howard Center for Investigative Journalism at the University of Maryland found that outlets that sell lottery tickets are often clustered in working class neighborhoods, more so in minority working class neighborhoods. This makes sense because the prospect of turning \$20 into \$3,000 is inherently more appealing to those with lower incomes. The same investigation also found that the majority of money generated from the lottery was being taken from these neighborhoods and invested in other areas, as well as benefitting two private companies from Canada and the UK who handle the administration of lottery systems. International Game Technology PLC (UK) and Scientific Games Holdings LP (Canada) administer all but two state lotteries, Vermont and Wyoming. On average, those who play the lottery lose 35 cents per dollar spent. But these lottery revenues fund education, right?

Typically, around 60% of state lottery revenues are paid back to winners, according to NPR. The remaining 40% is what is used to first pay administrative costs and advertising, which typically consume around a quarter of revenues, and the remaining 15% is spent on education. In Florida specifically, 25% of every ticket is directly put into the Education Enhancement Trust Fund, while a whopping 65% is doled out to winners. Putting aside that those numbers are vastly lower than what most would assume goes into education funding, just because some money is going to the right place doesn't mean that it is spent properly. Both the nature of education funding and where the money goes is often obscured.

When analyzing proceeds from the Michigan lottery, the Howard Center investigation found that the state's funding formula unfairly disadvantaged schools that educate low-income and at-risk youth by not giving adequate weight to the higher costs involved. This means that rural, minority, and working class areas, which are disproportionately low-income and at-risk, received less money per-student than schools in wealthier areas. In our dear neighbor Florida, a similar, yet somehow more appalling, situation has developed.

A 2025 report by Medium found that despite around a quarter of the lottery's revenues going towards education, the state's per pupil spending ranks 47th in the nation and far below the national average. This is primarily due to the fact that as lottery revenues increased, general fund allocations decreased. In other words, Florida legislators used lottery revenues to subsidize cuts to the education budget. Even more shocking, a 2015 report by Last Week Tonight with John Oliver found that in 21 of the 24 states with lotteries that they investigated, education funding either flatlined or decreased.

Where the lottery money goes also needs to be addressed. In most states, the primary programs funded by lottery revenues are college scholarship programs. The pursuit of higher education should be attainable to anyone, regardless of their economic background, but this cannot come at the cost of primary and secondary education (K-12). The same Medium article points out that K-12 spending in Florida decreased on a per pupil basis from 2008-2023 when adjusted for inflation. Yes, scholarship programs are important, but many of the poorest in this country are still not able to attend college because of the opportunity costs, or the hours (i.e. money) that they lose from having to redirect their time to schooling. Primary and secondary education is the backbone of a developed society, and it is quite frankly asinine to prioritize higher education over those foundational programs.



In addition to this, several studies have found that increased legal gambling has a positive relation to rates of both frequent and problematic gambling. Higher rates of problematic gambling are also associated with higher average household debt, as well as crime rates within communities. This should not come as a surprise. In 1999, the National Gambling Impact Study Commission stated that $\frac{2}{3}$ of all lottery sales were attributable to only 10% of participants. It is far from unreasonable to assume that the 10% of participants fall into the same categories that comprise the majority of lottery participants. Many states publish data sets designed to hide this uncomfortable fact, typically by not differentiating lottery participation by total amount spent. In this way someone who spends \$200 a week on the lottery and someone who spends \$1 are considered equal participants. Neither of the two proposed lottery bills in Alabama have substantial provisions for proceeds to go towards aiding problematic gambling.

A Tax on Poverty

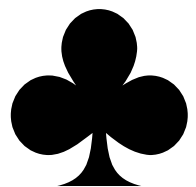
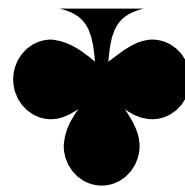
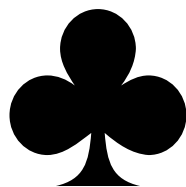
The problem identified by Rep. Ensler is that Alabama lags behind in terms of finding new and stable sources of revenue to fund the state budget. While this may be true in some ways, it is also true that the current streams of revenue utilized by the state are inadequate by design. Instead of finding new sources of revenue, why not improve and stabilize the existing ones? Why not reinvent our tax system so that the wealthiest in the state are made to pay their fair share? As stated before, lottery systems primarily draw revenues from working class and minority communities, those who are the most disadvantaged in the current system. Why ask those who are disadvantaged by this broken system to pay to fix it instead of asking those who benefit the most from it to do so?

These are the questions voters should be asking.

Lotteries are an inherently regressive stream of revenue for states. Not only do working class people more frequently play, but the costs of playing strain their budgets far more than their wealthier counterparts.

The main, but not only, problem with our state's budget is that it relies so heavily on regressive structures to produce revenue. In what way does it make sense to introduce yet another regressive, inconsistent structure to solve that problem? Why do so many progressives and leftists feel that the lowest earners in our state should be made to pay the vast majority of costs to fix our lackluster education system? Education is not only a public good, but also a necessity. It is like clean air, clean water, or healthcare, it benefits every single individual in the community for their neighbor to be well fed, healthy, and educated. Education should be a publicly funded necessity, a priority in every budget and consideration, not the product of a regressive tax on poverty. In any other context, funding a public necessity through a scheme that thrives on addiction would be considered immoral and repugnant. It would be considered a travesty and the gravest miscarriage of justice to build the public good on a foundation of false hope and suffering. Yet, it is seen as the progressive option in Alabama.

When researching and discussing this article, I was confronted with the same points in favor of the lottery; its ability to fund state programs, loss of revenue to neighboring states, and how much fun it is to buy scratch-offs. Often, I was met with open hostility at the mere mention of raising taxes. Yes, I've laid out some reasons why the lottery should be rejected altogether and I stand by them, but that is not the ultimate point of this article. The lottery bills are little more than a coat of plaster on the walls of a house whose foundation is riddled with cracks. Sure, it will look nice, but the underlying structure is bound to collapse whether it's seen or not. If the people of Alabama want a lottery bill so that they can buy scratch-offs at their local corner store, fine, so be it, but it is not the prestigious panacea that many believe it to be. Discussing any lottery bill is not worth the time it takes to read it until the state tax system is completely overhauled.



While some may wish to do this through innumerable amendments to the world's longest constitution, a more radical and direct solution would be more viable. What Alabama truly needs is a complete and total rewrite of the state constitution, a new constitutional convention. The 1901 constitution, and by extension its 2022 recompilation, is an artifact of an institution that was rightly demolished, though its ghost still haunts the dark recesses of the halls of power. The 1901 constitution should be torn up, cast down, and swept into the dustbin of history, along with the moneyed interests which it was designed to protect. By no other means can the righteous and the just fully exercise the spectre of Jim Crow from this state. Yes, this is asking a lot of Alabama, and yes it is a radical solution, but justice often asks much to be enacted and is radical and uncompromising in its scope.

Many people, especially those holding or seeking elected office, are weary of overhauling our tax system. It can initially seem unpalatable to many voters, but Alabama Arise has noted many ways in which tax codes can, and should, be rewritten in such a way as to make the wealthiest households pay their fair share while alleviating the burden of the poorest households. A primary example is property tax. As soon as someone mentions adjusting the property tax system, many become immediately defensive, "So you want to raise property tax?!" Many are proud to live in a state with the one lowest property tax rates in the country, but appalled to simultaneously have one of the most underfunded education systems. Schools are tied to property taxes, but the state constitution mandates that those taxes stay low across the board while also restraining local bodies from raising them.

Instead of giving the same tax breaks that are afforded to homeowners to timber companies, we should adjust the property classifications and the poorly targeted tax breaks so that homeowners are the beneficiaries. Instead of finding a new source of revenue, we should get rid of the federal income tax deduction, which primarily benefits the wealthy. Institute a farmstead exemption so that reasonably sized family farms can be protected

while large scale agribusiness is made to pay more. Continuing with the current system only forces reliance on sales taxes. The state and local reliance on sales taxes is both unstable and regressive.

We should also enable local bodies to see to their own taxes without constant interference from Montgomery. The overcentralization of power mandated by the state constitution is like a leash around the neck of every municipal body being pulled to the point of asphyxiation. Local governments are gasping for any breath of air they can get just to stay alive, but the moneyed interests of this state would rather see ordinary people suffer than to part with even a pittance of their ill gotten gains. They would rather see the most underserved and disadvantaged in our communities ground into subservience rather than see them healthy, educated, and living meaningful, fulfilling lives.

We have viable alternatives to a state lottery, alternatives that do not subsist on siphoning wealth from minority and working class communities or perpetuating addiction. These alternatives are not simple, they are not easy, and they cannot be summed up in a catchy slogan, but they are equitable and just. They require the moneyed interests that fund both Democrats and Republicans to pay their fair share, which is a good deal more than they pay now. Maybe that is why these alternatives seem so far-fetched, lofty, and radical. Maybe that is why politicians on both sides of the aisle have chosen to work within a broken system that was conceived to preserve the interests of a clique of wealthy elites.

**HOMERULE
OR
BUST!**

A constitution, as an instrument of republican governance, should be by and for those to whom it is applied. To protect the interests of the empowered few at the expense of the dispossessed many is not a pursuit of equality, but rather a statement of privilege. Anyone who cannot see how our state constitution is such a statement is incapable of representing the working class. When those in power are allowed to dictate the conversation according to their views and their needs so completely and for so long, their interests become confused with that of general society. Their point of view becomes confused with objective fact. The structures that they put into place seem eternal and immovable. That will always be the case unless we have the desire, energy, and imagination to move beyond the limits that are handed down to us. We must have the courage to break free from the constraints imposed on us. We should not ask why the alternatives seem so daunting, but rather why are we so afraid to pursue them to their conclusion?



A special “Thank You” to Alabama Arise, whose constant vigilance and dedication to the people of Alabama is sorely needed in these dark times. Readers are highly encouraged to familiarize themselves with this wonderful organization by visiting their website (Alarise.org), where their 2026 Tax and Budget Handbook can be downloaded as a free PDF.

Both I and this publication are not affiliated with Alabama Arise in any way, aside from being Alabamians, and the views expressed in this article are not representative of Alabama Arise or any of their affiliates. Their analysis of the Alabama state budget and tax system was simply one of many documents researched for this article, though a particularly valuable one.



WHAT IS ALREADY HERE?

By HollyRose Baker

We love offering suggestions on the ways things can improve. The left is known for its big dreams, and we hope to keep dreaming bigger still. But in that dreaming, sometimes it is easy to lose site of where other big dreamers that came before have already won, in big and in small ways. Occasionally, it is good ground ourselves in the material world, and part of that process is acknowledging the ways the world as it is is already somewhat in line with the world we want to see. With that in mind, let us take a moment to highlight some areas where Mobile, its populace, its organizations, and its city workers have done good, successful, helpful work.

I ♥ Tree Tunnels!

When people come here, they fall in love with our roads. There is a magic to walking, biking, or driving under an arch of green that goes on for miles. Generations of city Workers have planned, planted, and maintained these spaces. Our infrastructure is designed around it. This green space is core to the city's identity. It keeps our temperatures down, reduces storm water run off, gives habitat for birds, ferns, and mosses. The strong and sprawling boughs of live oak branches buffer us against storm wind, and stabilize our soils during floods. And the best part is, the vast majority of street trees in our city are native. They often stand over imported ornamentals, our beautiful azaleas and camellias, but also, the green acres of land under our street trees stands ripe with potential for native shade loving plants. We have the groundwork for something amazing, and we could build on it to make it even more beautiful and ecologically beneficial. In a time where people in cities around the country are begging for street trees and native plants, Mobile stands as a shining example.



I ♥ Food Banks!

Some people look at a problem and know, with pure determination and certainty, that something can be done to fix it. This certainly true of the people who have established numerous food banks across the city. The largest of these is the Love All Pantry which operates out of Central Presbyterian. They work to ensure that food from local farmers and local grocery stores isn't wasted, and they have distributed to thousands of families in Mobile. Feeding the Gulf Coast also helps arrange food distribution all around the region. These two large bastions of giving are amazing, but they aren't the only ones. Throughout the city, there are food shares in apartments, religious fellowships, and college dorms. There are blessing boxes posted outside of churches, and many are filled near daily. There are mutual aid networks that accept groceries and leftovers, and bring them to community members who can't travel, especially those who are being targeted by ICE. It is sad to live in a world where such a thing is needed - but like Mr. Rogers said. When things look bleak, look to the helpers, and take heart.

I ♥ Free Healthcare!

Free healthcare opportunities aren't as wide spread as we might like, but when we talk about this, we often overlook the ones that do exist. Shell Health offers free testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, free preventative medication to people without insurance, and free treatment to people living with HIV. Soon they will even have their own in-house pharmacy! Franklin Primary Healthcare offers free blood pressure and blood sugar checks for the unhoused community, alongside free checkup and question & answer sessions with medical providers at their outreach events. Free dental days save the lives and the teeth of many people locally, and Dedicated Dentist Inc. is good enough to host these every October.

I ♥ Libraries!

When I need to learn how to fix something in my house, I try to search it online. Nowadays, most of the information I find is produced by an AI, and its terribly wrong. What is a girl to do? Luckily, Mobile county has at least 14 public libraries with staff dedicated to helping people like you and me find answers to all of our questions. You can sit for hours and read, play chess, and look at art and historical documents. Some libraries offer extra classes and programs for the public for free. My particular favorite library is the West Regional Branch on Grelot, which is surrounded by beautiful woods, and showcases some native flowers in the back. It has stunning architecture, and an amazing reference section on gardening. The Ben May Library is also deeply important as a place for the most disadvantaged members of our local community to access critical resources. The local history and genealogy branch next to it is a place like no other, with information no where else has. And I love the little library in Chickasaw, being nestled so perfectly in a wonderful park, near a public amphitheater.



West Regional Library

I ♥ Pride!

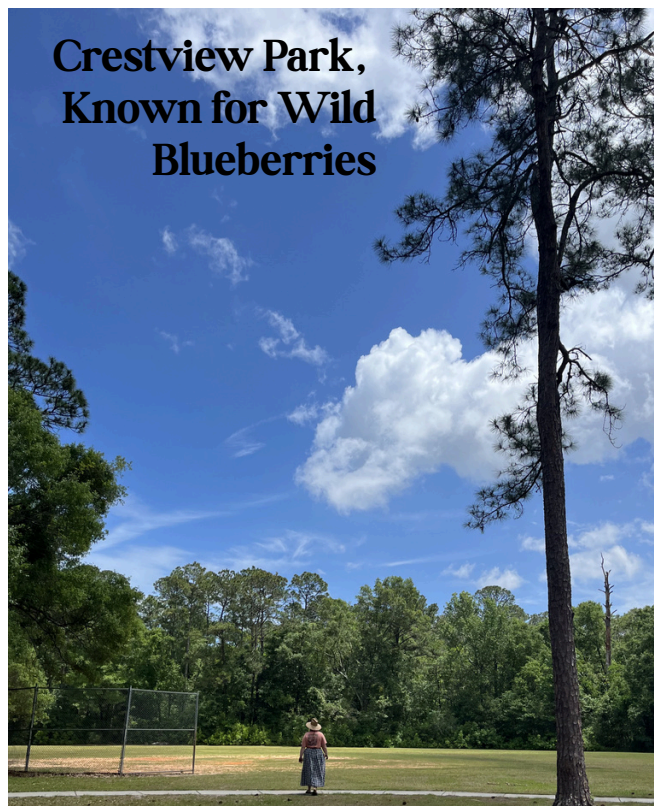
Pride in Mobile is an ever changing, ever growing, ever diversifying consortium of parties, protests, parades, picnics, food shares, shows, educational events, family events, and so much more. Pride groups in the city began more than fifty years ago, and their lineages still live on. This year, many different queer groups in the city have come together to organize what they hope will be the largest, most inclusive pride yet. They are calling it "Alive With Pride." There will be events all through the month of June, with updates posted on the "Rainbow Pride of Mobile" Facebook page. The main event will be the Pride Art walk on June 12th, which will feature free food from local mutual aid groups and the Unitarian Universalists, free HIV testing from Shell Heath, and about a hundred booths of local artists and non profits.

I ♥ Public Land!

It is easy to feel like the whole world is owned by someone else. We often feel small and enclosed, renting tiny apartments, or trying to garden on quarter acre yards. But when we open our minds to the vast amounts of land that's available for the public to access, the world begins to feel open and new. There are thousands of acres open for public access here in Mobile County. There are of course our city parks, like Arlington, Langan, Crestview, and Chickasabogue. And while we might not think of them that way, the campuses of our universities, hospitals, and even some government buildings also function as public land. But beyond that, on a grand scale, there are also places like the Grand Bay Wildlife Management area, and the Mobile-Tensaw WMA, which together comprise 56,000 acres of public land. In hunting season, they feed families. Outside of hunting season, they draw in birders, botanists, and curious people of every stripe. The Heron Bay and Protersville Bay Forever Wild Tracts comprises over a thousand acres in the south of the county, preserved for the public good. These large places of natural beauty are wonderful, and I encourage people to visit them respectfully and often! However, I do think that sometimes we miss the more everyday elements of public land that are right under our noses. We don't think of it this way, but our streets, roads, and sidewalks are all public land, and so are many of the roadsides and green strips between them. We recognize this best when we are out of our cars, and interacting with these places directly as humans. If you have ever been to a street party outside of Braided River Brewing, or been to Art walk, or attending a protest march down a Mobile street or sidewalk, or even been to Mardi Gras, you know just how wonderful these publicly owned places can be for building community.



Crestview Park, Known for Wild Blueberries



I ♥ Public Restrooms!

In a world where it's getting harder and harder to leave your house without spending a dollar, public restrooms are a welcome reprieve. We have one right in the heart of downtown, nestled under the pavilion at Bienville Square. A short bus ride down broad street will bring you to Arlington park, which has a stunning view of both the bay and the downtown skyline. It also has a public restroom well known for its cleanliness. Soon, a sister park will open nearby, called Brookley By The Bay, and city officials have said it will have the nicest public restrooms yet, with many single stall public toilets built for privacy. Mobile also plans to add public restrooms to every park in its new parks district located off of Dauphin Island Parkway. Mobile has even brought in temporary public restrooms designed for accessibility during large events like Mardi Gras. These adult changing stations allow for members of our community to finally gain access to our city's most important cultural events. Let's hope the city continues this trajectory with more public restrooms, more accessibility, and even more thoughtful and inclusive design. They have already set great precedents for themselves.

I ♥ Museums!

Mobile is a city of deep history, and nothing shows off that history quite like our local museums. However Museums are often so much more than we give them credit for. We think of quiet glass displays of things we can't touch, large paintings hung on a wall and separated from us by a platform and laser alarms - and those things have their place. But our local museums offer so much more than that. Every year, the Mobile Museum of art invites local artists to come and show and sell their crafts to the public. The University of South Alabama Archeology Museum hosts archeology day, where members of the public can come and learn skills and play games related to the archeological record. They invite indigenous communities to participate, and together, they provide demonstrations of pottery making, atlatl throwing, historic cooking, and so much more. It is a wonderful event connecting living history and past. The Mobile Medical Museum also throws its doors open to the public for its Harvest Heritage festival. Where as the Archeology Museum has a native plant garden, the medical museum has a medical and edible garden! The Africatown Heritage house hosts community education days. The history museum offers classes alongside their changing exhibits. Truly, no matter who you are, there is a museum in Mobile that has something you want to see.



UUFM Community Garden



I ♥ Community Gardens!

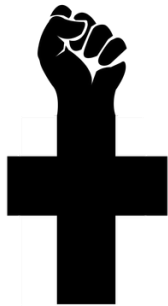
Everyone ought to have access to free, healthy, locally grown produce. Luckily for us, a lot of people in our area have decided not to wait on someone else to provide it, and have been doing it themselves. Some churches have large plots they tend with tractors, and distribute on a few harvests days. Some apartment complexes and old folks homes have gardens they build on the small scraps of land around them. Some communities are gardening on the one empty lot in their neighborhood, others are taking back their parks, growing food, making compost, and turning resources like wood chips and concrete blocks into the very fruit of life. These gardens start independently, as projects born of a desire to change the world in small ways. But often, after beginning, a new garden is welcomed with open arms into the community of gardens. People who've been doing this for years show up to share knowledg, seeds, and compost. Although not every garden is a member, the back bone of this infrastructure of care and sharing is the Mobile Urban Growers, a consortium of local community gardens. They help be a meeting place for the community of growers, and help keep us connected to programs like the food pantrys.

← "I think it's time for anarchists to start building something for those anarchists that are leaving the prisons through parole, End of Sentence, or otherwise. Some of us will be

June 11.

International Day of Solidarity with Longterm Anarchist Prisoners.

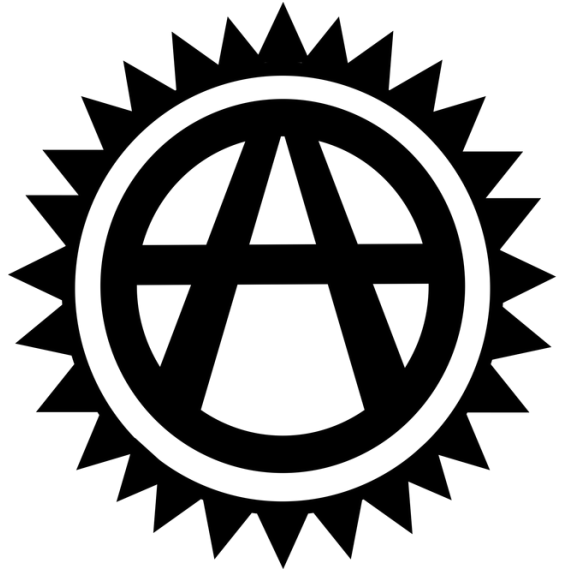
Join the Anarchist Black Cross.



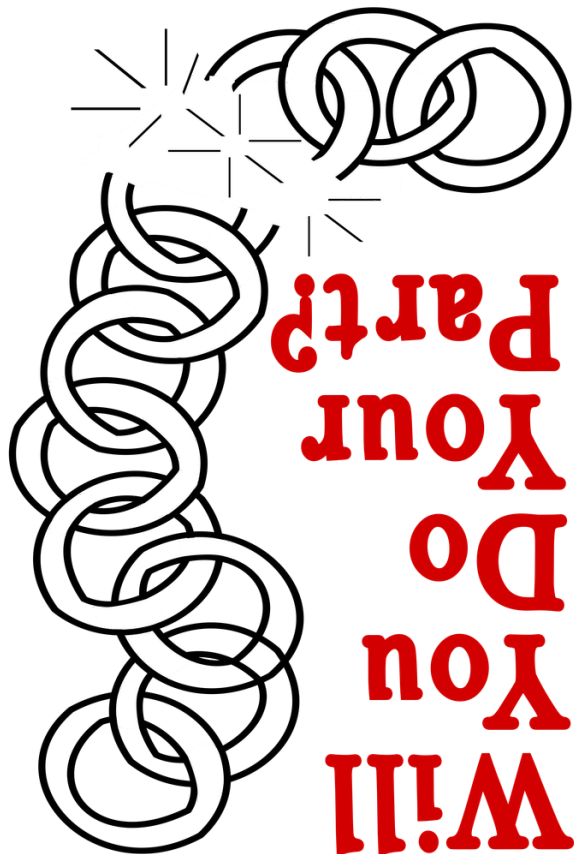
Join a support Committee for an anarchist prisoner.

Close every prison. Break every chain. End the bondage. Let the people go free.

Free Them All.



Practice Abilition In Everyday Life.



Will You Do Your Part?

needing housing, clothes, etc. once out. You know, something we can plug into." - Micheal Kimble

Virginia Spiderwort

Tradescantia virginiana

Article by HollyRose Baker of the Lower Alabama Native Plant Society

Spiderwort In The Garden

Before flowering, it looks almost like an ornamental grass. It looks beautiful when planted in lines or curves beside a path. It can spread quite a bit, so having a designated area for it and pulling or mowing the rest is a common gardening practice. It gets brown patches and dies off as the weather heats up, so it is recommended to interplant it with something that will start growing up right around the time that it starts to die back. It also works well under american beautyberry bushes, adding some similar color earlier in the year before those fully leaf out. It is well loved by many native bee species.

Uses For Spiderwort

The flowers are often made into a purple drink or purple vinegar. The liquid from the stems can help relieve itchy insect bites - but for about 1 person in ten, the liquid is an additional irritant. Do a test with a small section of healthy skin first.

Characteristics

Virginia Spiderwort flowers early, from mid February to mid May -or until temperatures get sweltering. Cutting the flowers back can encourage them to flower again. Occasionally, it will flower again in the fall. The flowers are most beautiful and pronounced in the morning, and often close or fall off in the afternoon. It gets 1 to 3 feet tall. It is tolerant of full sun to dappled shade, but it flowers earlier in sunny areas, and later in shaded areas. It can grow in a variety of conditions, but will spread more rapidly in moist ares with good dark soil, like former wetlands. There are naturally occurring varieties in many shades of purple and pink, as well as rarer white flowered individuals.

Propagating

To propagate, simply dig up and divide a cluster of these in early spring. A plant that has been established for a year or two can typically be divided into 15 to 30 plants.

A Native Flower For Your Yard!



Acquiring

This is perhaps one of the easiest native plants to acquire - in fact, for a great many of you, it will likely come up in your yard on its own. If it does not, simply go on a walk during its bloom time, before your neighbors have mowed down everything in the yard. Soon, you will find a neighbor with these present in abundance. Knock on their door and kindly ask if you may dig some up.

