THE YELLOWHAMMER HANDBOOK

NOVEMBER 2026

Guide to Service in the Alabama Executive Branch

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A Field Manual for Alabama Appointees and Transition Teams | November 2026

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About This Book

Taking an appointment is not the same as taking a job. The title may sound familiar and the authority behind it may not be. You can arrive with the Governor's confidence and still lack the power to hire the person you want, sign the contract on your desk, move money between programs, or direct a board that the statute makes independent. None of that makes the office unimportant. It tells you where your authority begins and ends.

This book is for three readers: the person weighing an appointment, the official about to walk into an agency or a board seat, and the transition staff who have to make that arrival work. It is organized around decisions and deadlines. The forms at the back are meant to be printed, filled in and kept. It does not map which positions change hands with a new administration. It explains the rules those appointees will meet.

The question people ask first is who can remove them and when their term ends. Chapter 1 splits that into seven questions, because the answers come from different laws.

Labels

Four tags mark the kind of statement you are reading. **LAW** is a requirement in the Constitution, a statute, an enrolled act or a rule. **OFFICIAL PRACTICE** is how an agency actually runs a process or schedule, which can change without a new law. **FIELD ADVICE** is operating judgment. It is not a rule. **CONFIRM** marks a point to settle with counsel or the agency before you rely on it.

What Changed in 2026

Several 2026 acts bear on the first questions an appointee asks. Chapters 1 and 14 cover removal and rulemaking in full.

Act	What it does	What it means for you
Act 2026-555 (HB220), effective Oct 1, 2026	Lets the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Speaker, President Pro Tempore and the House and Senate Minority Leaders remove board members they appointed, at any time, despite any contrary law or removal process. Excludes the Port Authority, the Ethics Commission and the governing boards of public colleges and universities.	On a covered board, a term no longer protects you. It is a test applied seat by seat, not a list of boards. See Chapter 1.
Act 2026-345 (HB475), effective June 1, 2026	Expands the Public Service Commission to seven members, adds a Secretary of Energy to the Governor's cabinet on Jan 19, 2027, and freezes retail electric base rates until Jan 1, 2029.	Four appointed commissioners' terms begin Jan 18, 2027. See Chapter 5.
Act 2026-403 (HB282), effective Oct 1, 2026	Changes how Pardons and Paroles Board vacancies are filled. New six-year terms start March 1.	The Governor appoints from a list of five, and the appointee serves at once. See Chapter 1.
Act 2026-319 (SB167), effective Oct 1, 2026	Courts reviewing contested-case decisions may consider an agency's reading of a statute or rule but may not defer to it.	Written legal reasoning in orders matters more. See Chapter 14.
Act 2026-81 (SB71), effective Feb 19, 2026	Limits agency rules on numeric environmental criteria stricter than federal law, with exceptions, and sets a nine-month deadline for rules that default to EPA IRIS values.	The deadline is Nov 19, 2026. Agency counsel decides whether any rule needs revising. See Chapter 14.
Act 2026-525 (SB280), effective Oct 1, 2026	Lets a TRS or ERS member with at least 10 years of contributing service buy up to four years of federal nonmilitary service credit at full actuarial cost, with conditions.	It is a purchase with conditions, not portability. See Chapter 2.
Act 2026-592 (SB272), effective on enactment	Requires custodians to redact account, tax ID, routing and employee ID numbers from public-contract records they produce. Bars knowingly selling, giving or receiving a list of names and addresses from local school board records to solicit those listed.	Build redaction into the records workflow. See Chapter 13.
Act 2026-608 (SB154)	Gives most state employees, classified and unclassified, a two percent raise starting with the first pay day on or after Oct 1, 2026. Does not reach employees whose pay is set by a labor agreement or contract, or local supplements.	Reconcile your salary baseline with the State Personnel Department. A cabinet salary does not follow automatically.
Act 2026-574 (HB307), effective Jan 1, 2027, and Act 2026-559 (HB361), effective Oct 1, 2026	HB307 adds points on state employment ratings for spouses of active duty service members. HB361 gives a state employee with a year of service paid organ or bone marrow donor leave of up to 30 or 7 days.	Ask personnel to apply both. Neither promises a political appointment.

The Transition Calendar

Some dates below are written into a statute. Others are calculated from a statutory formula, and the arithmetic is shown. A calculated outer limit is not a scheduled end date. Confirm any date against the issuing office's own calendar before you build a plan on it.

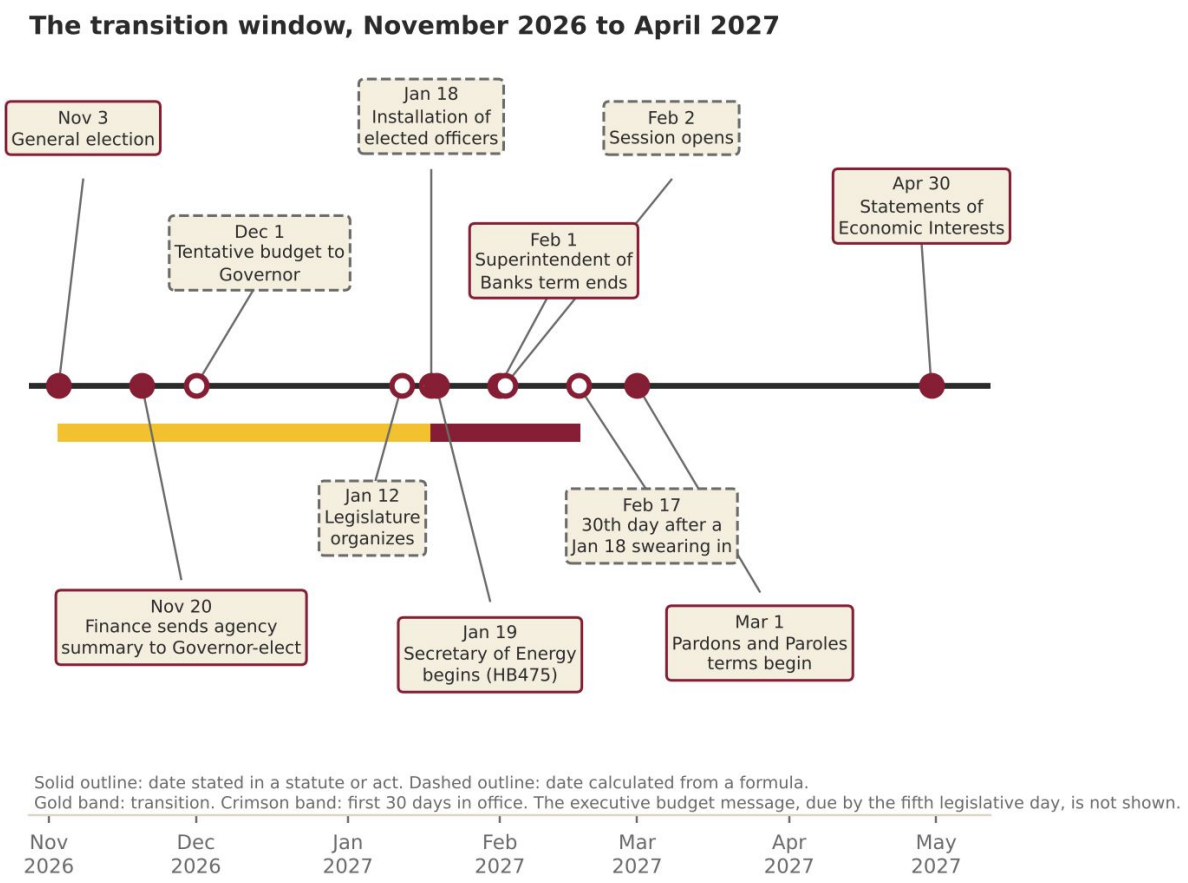


Figure 1. The transition window, November 2026 to April 2027

Date	What happens	Basis
Nov 1, 2026	Passed. Agency expenditure estimates were due to the Department of Finance. The Executive Budget Office set 5 p.m. Nov 2 for fiscal year 2028 requests.	Calculated. §41-4-84
Nov 3, 2026	Passed. General election held. The officers elected take office on installation day, Jan 18, 2027.	Secretary of State
Nov 19, 2026	Nine months after SB71 took effect. An agency with a rule that makes EPA IRIS values the default must have revised it. Not every agency has such a rule.	Calculated. Act 2026-81
Nov 20, 2026	The Department of Finance sends the Governor-elect a summary of agency program and financial information, no later than this date.	Fixed. §41-19-6(d)

Date	What happens	Basis
Dec 1, 2026	Finance prepares the tentative budget and sends it to the Governor. How Finance handles a transition year is practice to confirm.	Calculated. §41-4-86
Jan 12, 2027	Legislature convenes in organizational session, second Tuesday in January, for no more than 10 consecutive calendar days.	Calculated. §29-1-4
Jan 18, 2027	Installation of the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, Auditor, Secretary of State, Treasurer and Commissioner of Agriculture and Industries. The appointed Public Service Commissioners' initial terms begin the same day.	Calculated. §36-3-1; §37-1-3
Jan 19, 2027	The Secretary of Energy joins the Governor's cabinet, appointed by and serving at the pleasure of the Governor.	Fixed. Act 2026-345
Feb 1, 2027	Term of the Superintendent of Banks ends. This applies to that one office, not to boards generally.	Calculated. §5-2A-3
Feb 2, 2027	Regular session begins. The limit is 30 legislative days and 105 calendar days. Counting Feb 2 as day one, day 105 is May 17, 2027, an outer limit and not a scheduled adjournment.	Calculated. §29-1-4
Feb 17, 2027	Outer date for live ethics training of covered executive officers and staff if the Governor is sworn in Jan 18. The Ethics Commission's Executive Director sets the actual date, which may be earlier.	Calculated. §36-25-4.2
By the 2nd legislative day	The Governor sends a proposed budget to the Legislature.	Const. §71.01(B)
By the 5th legislative day	The Governor delivers the program and financial plan message to a joint session, with an explanatory report. This is separate from the budget transmittal.	§41-19-7
Mar 1, 2027	New six-year Pardons and Paroles Board terms start. A sitting member's term ends on the last day of February after the sixth year.	Fixed. Act 2026-403
Apr 30, 2027	Statements of Economic Interests are due for calendar year 2026 from every covered filer.	Fixed. §36-25-14

CONFIRM

The legislative day count, the training date for a new administration's staff, and any 2027 salary threshold are not set yet. Treat calculated dates as planning dates.

Start Here: The Six Questions

Before you accept an offer, get six answers in writing.

1. **Who legally appoints me?** The statute names the appointing authority. A phone call does not.
2. **Who must approve or confirm the appointment, if anyone?** Senate consent applies only where the Constitution or a statute requires it, and the statute says what you may do before it.
3. **What are my term, my holdover rule and my removal rule?** Three questions, and the answers may come from different laws. Chapter 1 shows how to separate them.
4. **What can I lawfully decide without someone else's signature?** Name the person who can sign for anything you cannot.
5. **What will I be paid, and what benefits come with it?** Get the pay rate, classification, insurance and retirement eligibility in writing. Ask what liability protection applies to you (Chapter 2).
6. **What changes for me on installation day?** Some offices turn over with an administration and some do not.

If any answer is incomplete, you have an unresolved offer, not a settled appointment.



Figure 2. The appointment path, five gates

At each gate, name the responsible official, the proof you need, and what you will do if approval is delayed.

Part I | Before You Say Yes

Three chapters on the decisions that cannot be undone cheaply: which job you are really being offered, what it will cost you personally, and what has to be finished before you can lawfully start.

Chapter 1 | Find Out What Job You Are Actually Being Offered

A transition team can talk about a job. Only the appointing authority can fill it. Alabama has department heads who answer to the Governor, directors picked by their own boards, board members with fixed terms, classified career employees, unclassified staff and a handful of offices created by special statute. The word “director” does not tell you which one you are looking at. Neither does the name of whoever called you first.

Start with the statute that creates the office, not the org chart. Ask agency counsel for the provision that creates the seat, names who appoints, sets the term, and says what happens at the end of the term and on removal. Where the statute is silent, ask counsel. Do not borrow an answer from federal practice.

One seat, seven separate questions

Everyone wants to know when their term ends and who can remove them. Those are different questions, and Figure 3 breaks the problem into seven. A seat can carry a fixed term and still be removable at any time. It can have holdover language and a replacement who has to meet separate qualifications. The answer to one question tells you nothing about the others.

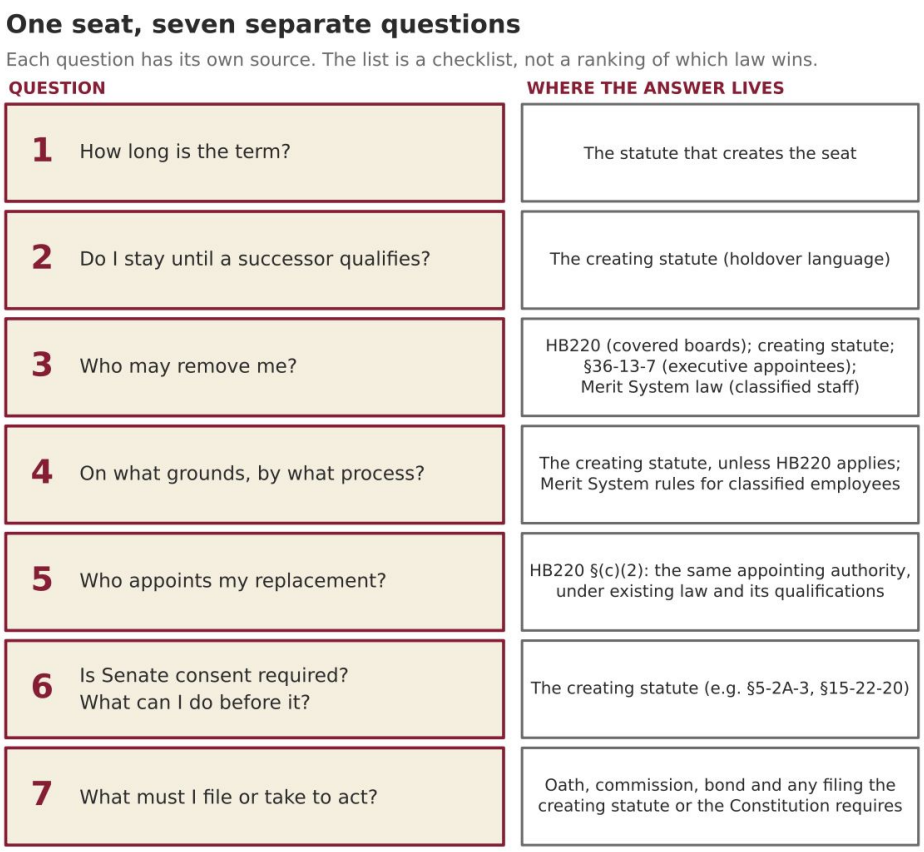


Figure 3. One seat, seven separate questions

Questions 1 and 2: term and holdover

Term length and holdover come from the statute that creates the seat. Five examples show how much they vary.

Seat	Term rule	Holdover
Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, Auditor, Secretary of State, Treasurer, Commissioner of Agriculture and Industries	Four years from installation, which takes place on the first Monday after the second Tuesday in January after the election.	Until successors are elected and qualified.
Superintendent of Banks	Expires the first day of February after the term of the Governor who made the appointment ends.	Not stated.
Board of Pardons and Paroles member	New appointees from Oct 1, 2026 serve six-year terms beginning March 1. A member serving on Oct 1, 2026 ends on the last day of February after the sixth year of that term.	Until a successor is appointed and qualified. An appointee to an unexpired term leaves at expiry.
Environmental Management Commission member	Six-year terms after the initial terms. No member may serve more than 18 years in total.	The expiring term continues until an appointment is made.

Seat	Term rule	Holdover
Public Service Commission member	Commissioners elected after June 1, 2026 serve six-year terms from the first Monday after the second Tuesday in January after the election. Four appointed commissioners begin initial terms Jan 18, 2027.	Commissioners serving on June 1, 2026 whose terms end after the Nov 2026 election continue until Jan 18, 2027.

Questions 3 to 5: who removes, on what grounds, and who replaces

Four sources of law answer the removal question: the statute that creates the seat, Act 2026-555 (HB220) for board members, §36-13-7 for the Governor's own appointees in executive departments and agencies, and Merit System law for classified employees. The 2026 act changed the most, so read it closely.

LAW | Act 2026-555, HB220

Section 1 of the act, effective October 1, 2026, provides:

(a) It defines a "board" as a board, authority or commission of individual members, some or all appointed, established under state law.

(b) An individual appointed to a board by the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Speaker, President Pro Tempore, House Minority Leader or Senate Minority Leader under a state law that authorizes the appointment serves at the pleasure of the Governor, Speaker, President Pro Tempore, House Minority Leader or Senate Minority Leader, as the case may be.

(c)(1) Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, including any law providing a specific removal process, each of those six officials may at any time remove a board member over whom the official has appointing authority.

(c)(2) The removed member is replaced under existing law by the same appointing authority, and the new member must meet the qualifications in the relevant state law.

(d) The act does not authorize the Governor to remove an individual the Governor appointed to fill a vacancy in an elected office.

(e) The act does not apply to the Alabama State Port Authority, the State Ethics Commission, or the governing board of any two-year or four-year public institution of higher education.

HB220 is a test you apply to a seat. It is not a list of boards. Ask four questions in order.

1. Is the body a board, authority or commission of individual members created under state law?
2. Was the person appointed by one of the six named officials under a state law that authorizes that appointment? The removal power runs only to members over whom the official has appointing authority. A seat filled by a board's own vote, by election, by virtue of another office or by a different official is outside it, though other law may still apply.
3. Is the board excluded by subsection (e)?

4. Does anything else limit the result, such as a term the Constitution fixes? The act speaks to statutes. It says nothing about seats whose terms come from the Constitution.

The act has limits. It does not reach employees. It does not reach a director chosen by a board, because a director is not a board member. It does not let the Governor remove a member the Speaker appointed, and it does not change the term length written in a statute. A seat can be covered and still have a term on paper.

CONFIRM

Subsection (b) lists the Lieutenant Governor as an appointing official but leaves the Lieutenant Governor out of the officials at whose pleasure appointees serve, while (c)(1) lets the Lieutenant Governor remove. An appointee of the Lieutenant Governor should get a written opinion from counsel.

CONFIRM

Subsection (c)(1) applies despite "any law providing a specific removal process." The act does not say whether that displaces a for-cause rule, a constitutionally fixed term or a nominating process like the one for Pardons and Paroles. Until an opinion or a court says, treat any seat with its own removal process as a question for counsel.

LAW | Gubernatorial removal

Ala. Code §36-13-7 authorizes the Governor to remove from office and discharge from employment, with or without cause, any person who holds office or employment in a state executive department or agency by appointment of the incumbent Governor or any preceding Governor, except employees subject to the Merit System.

It covers the Governor's own appointees and no one else's. Whether a particular office is an "executive department or agency" for this purpose is a question for counsel.

Who selects the director? Board-selected, Governor-appointed and board-member seats

The same agency can have a Governor-appointed commission, a director chosen by that commission, and employees under the Merit System. Each has a different removal rule.

Position	Who appoints	Who can remove
State Personnel Director	The State Personnel Board. The statute requires age over 19, recognized character and ability, and five years of residence as a qualified voter.	The board, for cause. It must give the director and the Governor a written statement of reasons and make it public before the removal takes effect. The Governor does not appoint this person, so §36-13-7 does not reach the director.

Position	Who appoints	Who can remove
Director of the Alabama Department of Environmental Management	The director is appointed by the Environmental Management Commission and serves at its pleasure. The seven commissioners are appointed by the Governor with Senate advice and consent.	The commission, at its pleasure. A commission member is a board member for HB220 purposes on its face.
Superintendent of Banks	The Governor, with Senate consent.	Section 5-2A-3 has no removal provision. A department head is not a "board member" under HB220, so §36-13-7 is the provision to check.

Question 6: Senate consent and authority before consent

Senate consent applies only where the Constitution or a statute requires it. The harder question is what you may do before the Senate acts, and three seats show three different answers.

Seat	Appointment and consent	Authority before the Senate acts
Superintendent of Banks	Governor appoints with Senate consent. Eligibility: five of the last ten years as an Alabama bank officer, a bank examiner or supervisory officer, or equivalent.	While the Senate is not in session, the appointee holds office and exercises the powers of the office until the Senate meets and passes on the appointment. If the Senate disapproves, the appointee vacates immediately.
Board of Pardons and Paroles	A nominating committee (the Lieutenant Governor, Speaker and President Pro Tempore) sends the Governor a list of five. The Governor appoints from it within 10 days, with Senate advice and consent.	The appointee serves immediately. The Governor submits the name to the Senate by the third legislative day after appointment, or after reconvening. If the Senate fails to vote before adjourning sine die in the regular session of the appointment, the appointee is deemed confirmed.
Environmental Management Commission	Governor appoints with Senate advice and consent. Each seat has its own qualification (a physician, an engineer, an attorney, a chemist and so on).	During a period when the Legislature is not in session, the appointee has the full power of the office until the Senate, on reconvening, votes to refuse consent.

The default rules differ. The Banks appointee serves until the Senate passes on the appointment. The Commission appointee serves until the Senate refuses. The Pardons and Paroles appointee is deemed confirmed if the Senate never votes. Do not carry one rule to another seat. The Secretary of Energy under Act 2026-345 is appointed by the Governor and serves at the Governor's pleasure. The act's text does not call for Senate consent.

Question 7: oath, commission, bond, filing and administrative readiness

Authority to act can depend on more than the appointment. Most offices require the constitutional oath, and a statute may add a commission, a bond or a filing with a named office. For each seat, ask agency counsel what has to be signed, sworn or filed, and by whom, before your first official act. Then close the administrative items: payroll

start, ethics training and filing category, system access, written delegations and the liability confirmation in Chapter 2.

Worked examples

DECISION TOOL | Worked example 1

A seat on the Environmental Management Commission. Assumption: you were appointed by the Governor, and nothing else in the commission statute limits removal.

Term: six years, maximum 18 years in total. Holdover: your term continues until a successor is appointed. Removal: the commission is a board of individual members under state law and you were appointed by the Governor under that law. It is not named in HB220 subsection (e). On the face of the act, the Governor may remove you at any time. Replacement: the Governor appoints, and the new member must meet the qualification for that seat. Senate: an appointee made while the Legislature is out of session has full power until the Senate refuses consent.

DECISION TOOL | Worked example 2

The State Personnel Director. Term and removal come from §36-26-7, not from the Governor's powers. The board appoints, and the board may remove for cause, with a written statement given to the director and the Governor and made public before the removal takes effect. Can the Governor remove the director? Not under §36-13-7, which reaches the Governor's own appointees, and not under HB220, because the director is not a board member. The Governor's influence runs through the board seats, which follow the first example.

DECISION TOOL | Worked example 3

A member of the Board of Pardons and Paroles. Term: six years starting March 1 for new appointees, with a sitting member's term ending the last day of February after the sixth year. Appointment: the Governor chooses from five names sent by the nominating committee, and the appointee serves at once. Removal: on its face HB220 reaches a board member appointed by the Governor. HB282 does not mention HB220, and HB220 says a removed member is replaced "under existing law." Existing law now includes the nominating process. Neither act says whether a removal under HB220 must be followed by a fresh list of five or whether the Governor may fill the seat another way.

CONFIRM

How HB220 interacts with the Pardons and Paroles nominating process, and with the impeachment and incapacity provisions HB282 keeps in §15-22-20, is not answered in either act. Get a written opinion before acting.

DECISION TOOL | Worked example 4

The Superintendent of Banks. The operative statute is §5-2A-3. The Governor appoints with Senate consent. The term ends the first day of February after the appointing Governor's term ends, which this cycle is February 1, 2027. While the Senate is out of session, an interim appointee holds the office and exercises its powers until the Senate acts. The statute does not address removal. This term formula belongs to this office alone.

FIELD ADVICE

Put the same four questions to your prospective supervisor, the appointing authority and agency counsel, separately: Who appoints? Who approves? Who supervises? Who removes? When the answers differ, ask for the statute in writing.

DECISION TOOL

Keep a one-page offer memo (Tool A) with the exact statutory title, employing entity, appointing official, approval, term, holdover, removal, classification, oath or bond, salary setter, benefits administrator, legal supervisor, signing authority and liability confirmation. Do not resign another job on the strength of an informal title.

Chapter 2 | The Personal Decision: Pay, Benefits, Conflicts and Risk

A senior title does not guarantee a salary, a leave balance, retirement credit or family insurance. Get a written offer with a lawful basis for the pay before you announce anything. Ask whether the rate is annual or semi-monthly and whether a special statute rather than a pay grade sets it.

Classification

Section 36-26-10 divides state service into exempt, unclassified and classified. The exempt service includes members of boards and commissions and heads of departments that the law requires to be appointed by the Governor or by a board with the Governor's approval. Each agency may also designate a few additional exempt positions. A prominent job is not automatically exempt, and the category affects hiring, removal and possibly leave. Get your classification from the State Personnel Department in writing.

Benefits: the issues to raise

Topic	What to know
Health insurance	The State Employees' Insurance Board sets plan-year rates, and premiums go up January 1, 2027. Ask the Board about your eligibility and effective date.
Retirement	The Retirement Systems published employee contribution rates of 7.5 percent (Tier 1) and 6.0 percent (Tier 2) for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2026. Ask the Systems whether you are a member, your tier and any prior service credit. Under Act 2026-525, a TRS or ERS member with at least 10 years of contributing service may buy up to four years of federal nonmilitary service at full actuarial cost, with conditions.
Leave	Title 36 now includes the Alabama Public Employee Paid Parental Leave Act of 2025 and, from October 1, 2026, paid living donor leave under HB361. Eligibility depends on your employer and status.

Each administrator can give you a written determination for your own situation. This book does not advise which options to choose.

Conflicts

Before you agree to serve, list your former clients, ownership interests, board seats, pending matters, contracts, lobbying relationships and family businesses. An interest that looks remote today can become central the day your agency issues a permit or a contract. Disclose through the proper process and ask counsel about recusal and divestiture. Disclosure alone does not resolve a conflict.

Personal Liability: Know the Issues

Appointees tend to ask about personal liability after a demand letter arrives. Ask before you start. Protection depends on the entity you serve and the kind of seat you hold, and your title does not tell you which applies. The points below are the issues to know. They are not legal advice, and nothing here says that you are or are not covered.

LAW | The Fund

Section 36-1-6.1 and the Risk Management Division's General Liability Trust Fund Guidelines (rev. Oct 1, 2023) set up a blanket arrangement for state employees. The Fund calls itself a fringe benefit, not insurance. It pays covered damages, court costs and attorney's fees for personal injury, bodily injury or property damage from negligent or wrongful acts within official duties.

The limit is $1,000,000 per occurrence, defense costs included. The Fund does not pay a judgment above the limit.

Issues to know:

- Coverage depends on the department. An agency must request coverage and pay for it. Whether an unpaid board member falls inside a participating department's coverage is not stated in the published materials.
- The Guidelines do not name discrimination or civil rights claims, wrongful termination, injunctive or declaratory relief, ethics complaints, or licensing and disciplinary proceedings.
- Exclusions include acts outside official duties, automobile liability, pollution unless sudden and accidental, a willful violation of a penal statute, and a dishonest or criminal act that ends in conviction. Educational institutions, the State Docks Department and independent contractors are outside the Guidelines.
- Conditions matter. Report an incident in writing as soon as practicable, cooperate, make no voluntary payments, and get the Fund's written authorization before any settlement. The Attorney General approves settlements over $25,000.
- The Attorney General appoints defense counsel. The materials do not say what happens if your interests and the agency's diverge.
- If the State or an agency pays or reimburses the premium on your private professional liability policy, the Guidelines say there is no Fund coverage.
- No published rule addresses a claim made after you leave office for an act during your service.

CONFIRM

Ask Risk Management and agency counsel in writing how these issues apply to your seat, and keep the answers. Talk to counsel or a licensed insurance professional of your choosing about private coverage.

Liability Confirmation Checklist

One per seat. Record who answered and the date.

Item	What to record	Answer and date
1. Entity and role	Exact department, board or commission. Employee, appointee, volunteer or contractor.	
2. Participation	Has the entity requested Fund coverage and paid? Are appointed members included?	
3. Covered duties and exclusions	Which of your duties are covered? How are employment, regulatory and equitable claims treated?	
4. Counsel	Who would represent you? Does that lawyer also represent the agency?	
5. Reporting route	Who receives a demand or suit? Risk Management and Attorney General contacts.	
6. Other policies	Any private policy, who pays the premium, and the effect on Fund coverage.	
7. After you leave	Written answer on claims made after departure.	

Chapter 3 | Vetting, Confirmation and the Paperwork That Can Stop a Start Date

The wrong question is “Is the candidate cleared?” The right one is “Cleared for what, by whom, under which rule, and with what still outstanding?” Alabama has no single screening package that applies to every appointee. Some offices require professional qualifications, residency, an oath, a bond, confirmation or job-specific screening, and an agency may add steps that are practice, not law.

Put the process on one page. The transition personnel lead records the office, candidate, appointing authority, required approvals, qualifications, reviewer, what has been received, what is pending, the earliest lawful start date and the fallback if approval slips. Keep private financial and screening material out of any widely shared folder.

A candidate is not ready until four gates are closed

Gate	What it covers	Typical proof
A. Authority	Enabling law, appointing instrument, term and approval requirements.	Statute citation, signed appointment, confirmation record where required.
B. Eligibility	Statutory qualifications, conflicts, disclosures and role-specific screening.	Qualification evidence, ethics review result, screening completed by the right office.
C. Employment	Classification, lawful salary, benefits, payroll and the required oath.	Written offer, personnel action, oath record.
D. Operations	Access, records orientation, counsel contact, written delegations and the liability protection confirmation.	Account provisioning, briefing completed, delegation letter, completed checklist.

If a gate is still open, mark the person “pending,” name the owner and record the lawful fallback. An unfinished confirmation or oath is not a paperwork delay.

Part II | Before Day One and Taking Command

Continuity first, then the real map of who can say yes, including the Governor's Office and the other elected constitutional officers.

Chapter 4 | Your First 72 Hours: Keep the Place Running

Your first obligation is continuity. Payroll must run. Critical contracts cannot quietly expire. Litigation deadlines will not wait for a new administration to get organized. A security incident will not ask whether your chief of staff has been hired. Before you announce a reform, find out what can go wrong this week.

Ask for a short, candid briefing from the agency's counsel, finance director, human resources lead, procurement officer, technology and security lead, records custodian, and the senior career official who knows the programs. Say that you want uncomfortable facts early. If they cannot tell you which matters are urgent, ask for the underlying docket, audit report, grant schedule and contract list.

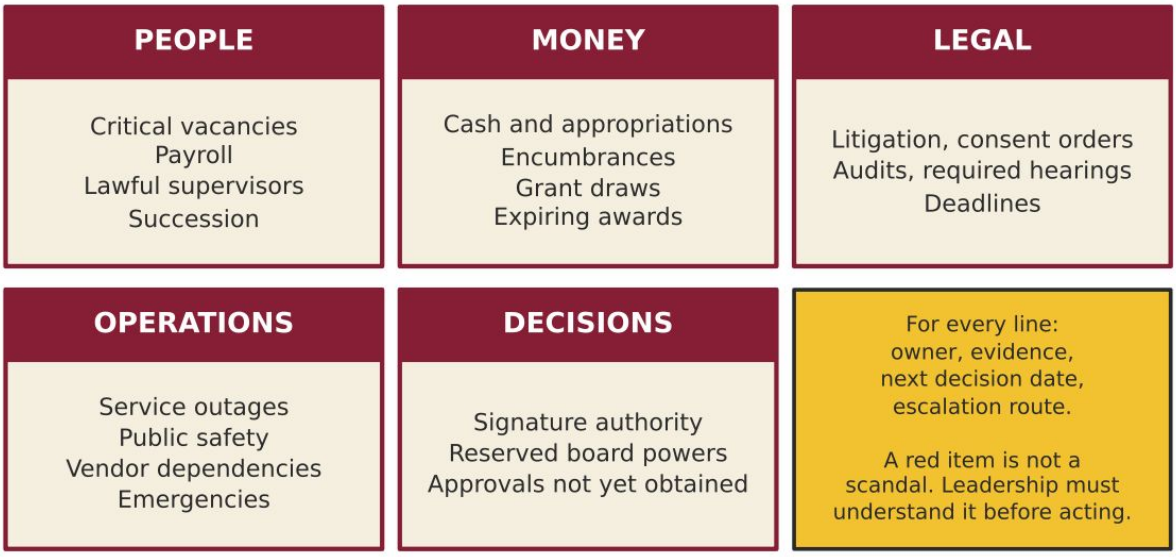


Figure 4. The 72-hour control board

Each line needs an owner, documentary evidence, a next decision date and an escalation route. A red item is not a scandal. It is something leadership must understand before acting.

DECISION TOOL | First meeting

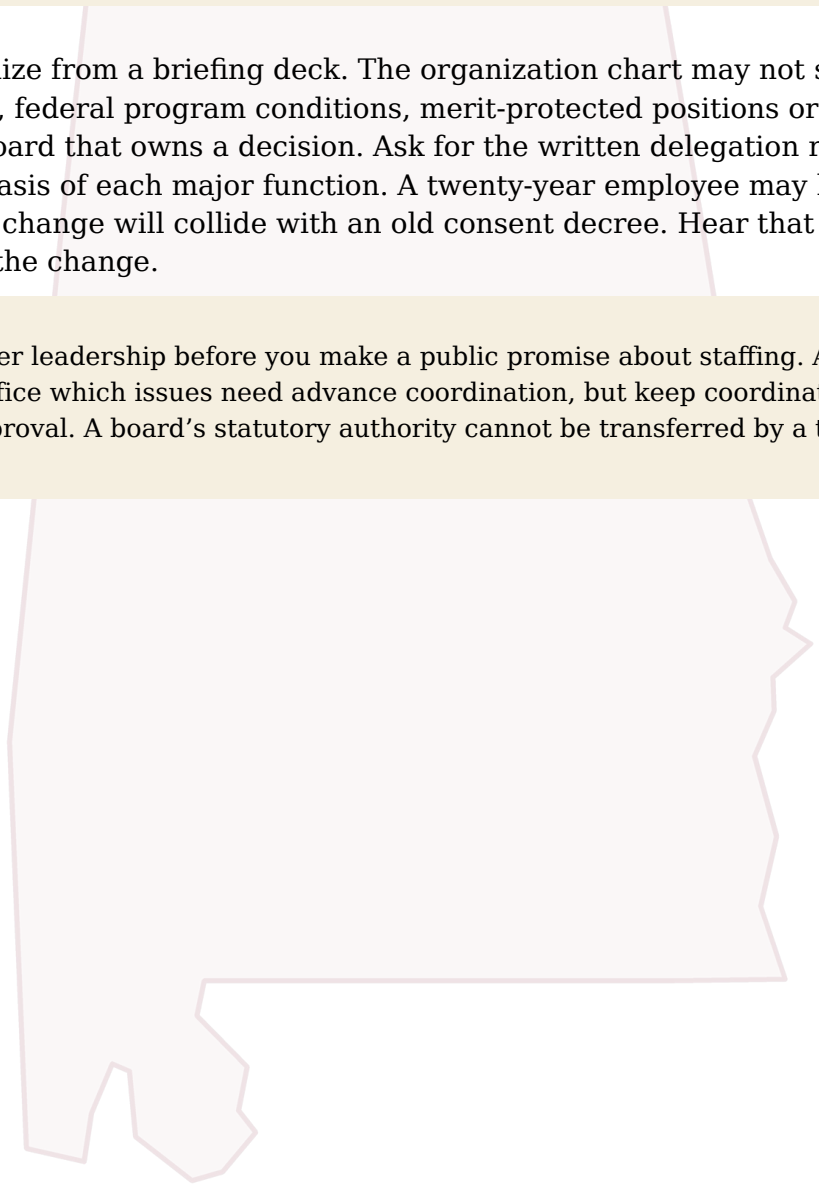
The first meeting. Ask these in order.

1. What deadline could cause legal or operational harm in the next thirty days? 2. What spending or personnel decision is waiting for my signature? 3. What litigation, audit or investigation demands attention? 4. Which contracts or grants could lapse? 5. What service failure is already visible to the public? 6. What decision has been promised that the agency may not legally deliver? 7. Who can act if I am unavailable? 8. Which liability program covers me and my staff, and who holds the written confirmation (Chapter 2)?

Do not reorganize from a briefing deck. The organization chart may not show the real approval chain, federal program conditions, merit-protected positions or the independent board that owns a decision. Ask for the written delegation register and the statutory basis of each major function. A twenty-year employee may know exactly where a policy change will collide with an old consent decree. Hear that person before you announce the change.

FIELD ADVICE

Meet the career leadership before you make a public promise about staffing. Ask the Governor’s Office which issues need advance coordination, but keep coordination separate from legal approval. A board’s statutory authority cannot be transferred by a transition memo.



Chapter 5 | Who Can Tell You Yes: The Real Map of Alabama Authority

Government is not a single chain of command. The Governor has substantial constitutional and statutory authority. The Legislature writes law and appropriates money. Other constitutional officers exercise their own powers. Boards and commissions may hire an executive director, decide contested matters or issue rules. Finance, Personnel and enterprise technology officials exercise statewide functions, subject to statutory exceptions. Local governments, federal agencies and public authorities control still more decisions.

An agency head should carry two maps. The first shows legal authority: which statute gives which body the power to appoint, spend, regulate, adjudicate or remove. The second shows working relationships: who must be consulted, who owns the money, who has the operational facts and who will defend the result in a legislative hearing. Both matter. Only the first can authorize an act.



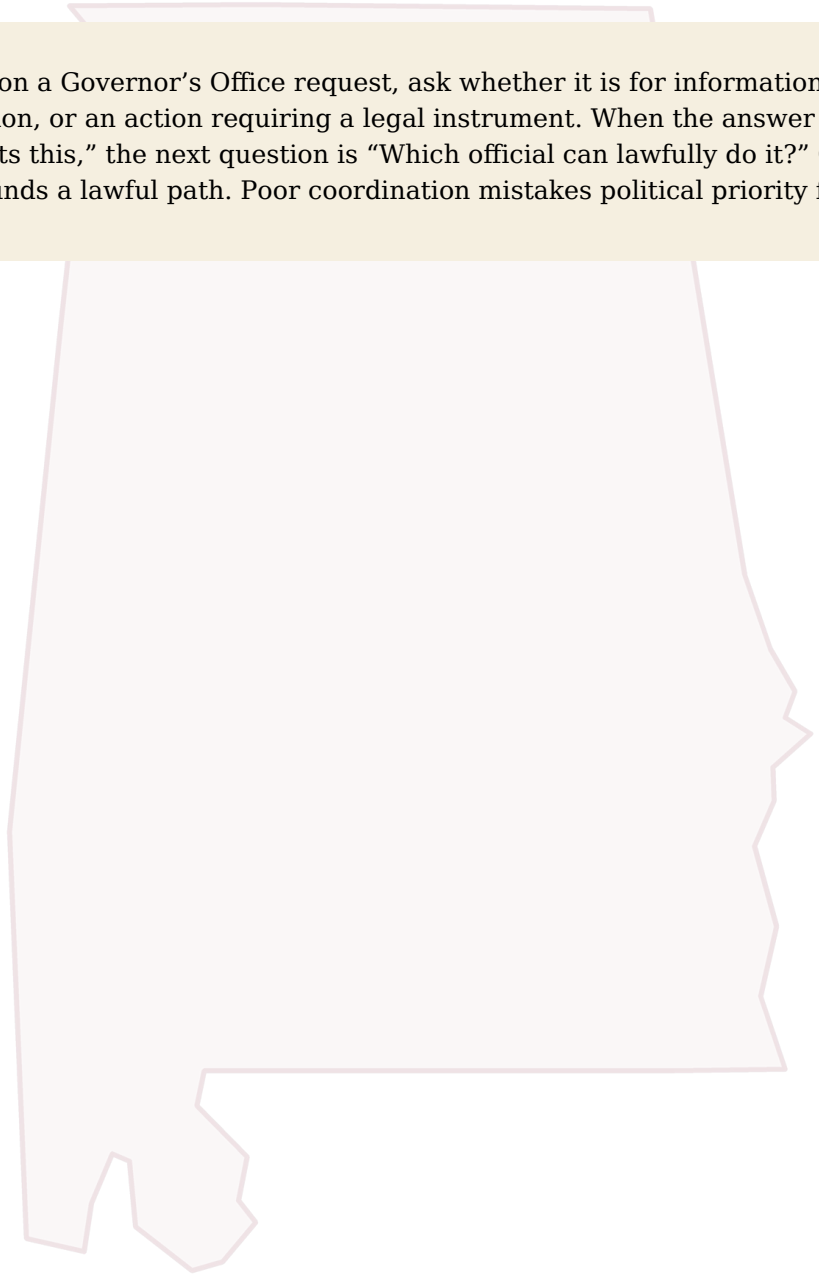
Figure 5. Separate sources of legal authority, not a chain of command

An Environmental Management Commission decision is not interchangeable with an Alabama Department of Environmental Management administrative decision. The

State Personnel Board and its director do not share every power. The Board of Pardons and Paroles and its administrative Bureau have distinct responsibilities. The Public Service Commission, reorganized by Act 2026-345, now has seven commissioners, a Secretary of Energy in the Governor's cabinet from January 19, 2027, and its own timing and qualifications (Chapter 1). Treat these examples as a habit to build, not a roster to memorize.

FIELD ADVICE

Before acting on a Governor's Office request, ask whether it is for information, a recommendation, or an action requiring a legal instrument. When the answer is "the Governor wants this," the next question is "Which official can lawfully do it?" Good coordination finds a lawful path. Poor coordination mistakes political priority for statutory authority.



Chapter 6 | The Governor's Office and How to Work With It

Most appointees meet the Governor's Office first, and most assume it runs the executive branch. It does not. It is a staff the Governor builds. The agencies carry the statutory authority, the money and the people, and each side should know which is which.

What it is

Section 36-13-2 lets the Governor employ an executive secretary, a principal administrative assistant, a special investigator, a press secretary and administrative assistants as needed, and attorneys to advise the Governor or appear in cases in which the state is interested. The statute gives the Governor wide room to shape the staff. Titles and reporting lines are the Governor's choice and change with each administration. The staff do not hold the Governor's own powers, and an instruction from a staff member is not itself a legal act.

The offices, as publicly listed

The Governor's website listed the offices below on November 11, 2026, under the outgoing administration. The third column says only what public sources show. Expect the incoming Governor to reshape the structure.

Office	Titles listed	What the public record shows
Chief of Staff and Deputy Chiefs	Chief of Staff; Deputy Chief of Staff (two); executive assistants	Titles only. The public page does not describe duties or agency portfolios.
Legal Office	Senior Legal Counsel (two); Special Assistant to the General Counsel; Extradition Coordinator and Contracts Officer	Section 36-13-2 lets the Governor employ attorneys to advise the Governor or appear in cases in which the state is interested.
Legislative Affairs	Director of Legislative Affairs; House Liaison; Recording Secretary	The Governor's site posts bill status, enacted acts, and audio and video of proceedings.
Communications	Communications Director; Deputy; Creative Content Manager; Director of Photography	The newsroom posts press releases, statements, executive orders, states of emergency and proclamations.
Policy	Senior Policy Advisor; Policy Advisor	Titles only.
Appointments	Director of Appointments	The office accepts applications by email or mail for more than 450 boards and commissions. Some seats must come from association-nominated lists. Submitted materials may be public records.
Scheduling and Constituent Services	Director of Scheduling and Press Assistant; Constituent Services Policy Correspondent	Titles only.

Office	Titles listed	What the public record shows
Administration and Fiscal	Director of Administration; Executive Branch IT Administrator; Chief Fiscal Officer; Fiscal Operations Manager	The site publishes flight logs and a contingency fund page. The state budget itself runs through the Department of Finance (Chapter 7).

CONFIRM

Titles come from the public staff page and describe the outgoing administration. Ask the new Governor's office for its staff list and which staff member covers your agency.

Where the public record puts the Governor's Office in your work

Subject	What the public sources establish
Appointments to boards	Applications go to the Appointments Office. Statutes decide who appoints, whether Senate consent applies and who removes (Chapter 1).
The budget	Agencies send estimates to Finance, Finance sends the Governor-elect a summary and prepares the tentative budget, and the Governor transmits a proposed budget by the second legislative day (Chapter 7).
Legislation	The regular session begins February 2, 2027. Bill status and enacted acts are posted on the Governor's site (Chapter 8).
Executive orders and emergencies	The newsroom publishes them. An order is a legal instrument. A staff instruction is not.
Records	The Governor's site has a public records request page. Your own communications with the office can be public records (Chapter 13).

What the Constitution gives the Governor

The powers below come from Article V of the Alabama Constitution. They are the legal base for most of what the Governor's Office does.

Power	What it means for an agency
Supreme executive power and the duty to see the laws faithfully executed	The Governor has a constitutional claim on executive agencies. The statutes that create each agency, board and elected office decide how far it reaches (Chapter 5).
Reports from executive officers	The Governor may require executive officers and state institutions to make sworn written reports. A knowingly false report, or an unexcused failure to report, is an impeachable offense.
Messages and the budget	The Governor reports on the state of the state, recommends measures and submits the revenue and budget estimates described in Chapter 7.
Special sessions	In extraordinary circumstances the Governor may call the Legislature into session by proclamation and name the subjects.

Power	What it means for an agency
Veto and line-item veto	The Governor may return a bill with objections within six days, Sundays excepted, and each house may override by a majority of its elected members. A bill presented in the last five days of a session may be approved within ten days after adjournment. The Governor may approve or disapprove individual items in an appropriation bill.
Reprieves and commutations	In death sentence cases the Governor may grant reprieves and commutations. The Legislature regulates pardons, paroles and probation, which the Board of Pardons and Paroles administers.
Commander in chief	The Governor leads the state militia and volunteer forces except when they are in federal service.
Filling vacancies	The Governor fills a vacancy in the offices of Attorney General, Auditor, Secretary of State, Treasurer and Commissioner of Agriculture and Industries until a successor qualifies. HB220 does not authorize removing someone the Governor appointed to fill such a vacancy (Chapter 1).

CONFIRM

This table summarizes Article V of the 2022 recompiled Constitution, which renumbered sections. Check the official text before you rely on a deadline or a vote threshold.

Executive orders

The Governor's newsroom publishes executive orders. Under the outgoing administration they have been used to declare and end states of emergency, create advisory and study commissions, call special sessions, and handle management and administrative questions such as regulatory reform and intergovernmental coordination. Recent titles include an order establishing the Alabama Office of Disability within the Department of Rehabilitation Services, an order on the responsible and productive use of generative AI in state government, an order on state participation in the National Flood Insurance Program, and an amendment transferring the Governor's Office of Volunteer Services to the Emergency Management Agency. The last one shows that a program housed in the Governor's Office can move to an agency by order. Orders numbered 742 through 746 in 2026 cover the federal Education Freedom Tax Credit program, access to financial services, the Governor's Commission on Screen-Based Instruction, and the rescission of earlier orders. The newsroom list, last checked November 11, 2026, ran through Executive Order 746.

Ask the Governor's legal staff which orders apply to your agency, and whether any has expired or been rescinded. A new Governor may revisit existing orders.

Emergencies

The Governor declares and ends states of emergency by executive order. The Alabama Emergency Management Act in Title 31, Chapter 9 gives the Governor emergency powers and the Emergency Management Agency a central role. Know your agency's part in the state emergency operations plan before the first storm, not during it, and ask agency counsel which emergency provisions affect your contracts, hiring and spending.

Appointments: the public process

The Appointments Office helps the Governor fill seats on regulatory and licensing boards and commissions, university boards of trustees, advisory boards and task forces. Its public page says the office looks for qualified candidates for more than 450 boards and commissions.

- **Apply.** Complete the general Gubernatorial Appointment Application, or the judicial positions version, sign the last page, attach a résumé, and send it by email to Appointments@governor.alabama.gov or by mail to the Governor at 600 Dexter Avenue, Montgomery, Alabama 36130.
- **Statutory lists.** Some appointments must come from lists of association-nominated candidates. The statute for the seat says whether a list applies and who sends it.
- **Selection factors.** The office says it aims for statewide boards that reflect the state's racial, gender, geographic, urban and rural, and economic diversity.
- **Public records.** Submitted materials may be public records. The page says information may be confidential in limited cases and tells applicants who think they need confidentiality to contact the office before they submit.
- **Senate consent.** The page does not describe Senate confirmation. Whether a seat needs it is a question for the statute that creates the seat (Chapter 1).

What the Governor's Office publishes

Record	What the public sources show
Flight logs	Section 36-13-16 requires quarterly posting of state aircraft flight logs with date, destination, purpose and a passenger manifest. The Examiners of Public Accounts audit the aircraft use each year. Logs tied to an ongoing Department of Public Safety criminal investigation are exempt.
Contingency Fund reports	The office posts monthly Contingency Fund reports on its website.
Public records requests	Send a request on the office's form, or by email to the office's public records address. The form covers only Governor's Office records. The office says it will tell requesters in advance about likely fees, and that requests needing substantial staff time take longer.
Cabinet and staff	The website lists the cabinet departments and the Governor's Office staff by title (this chapter and the Directory).

Working with the Governor's Office: six standing rules

1. Start with your assigned contact. Ask the Chief of Staff's office on day one which staff member covers your agency, and who handles legislative, communications and appointments matters for you. Use that route.
2. No surprises in either direction. The Governor's Office should not learn about a lawsuit, an audit finding, a data breach or a major layoff from a reporter, and your agency should not learn about an announcement that touches its programs the same way. Agree early on what gets a call and how fast.

3. Bring a recommendation, not a problem. A short memo that states the issue, the options, the cost, the legal authority and your recommendation will get a decision. A request for direction rarely does.
4. Clear the Governor's name, not your own authority. Anything announced in the Governor's name, such as an event, a release, a grant award or an initiative, should go through communications and scheduling first. Decisions that your statute assigns to you or to your board remain yours, and no one else can lawfully make them for you.
5. Keep the legislative program in one place. Coordinate agency bills, amendments and positions through the Governor's legislative staff, and do not let a legislator's request go unanswered while you wait for clearance.
6. Write it down. When the Governor's Office asks for something, record who asked, what was asked, and whether it was a request for information, a recommendation or an action that needs an instrument.

The yearly rhythm

When	What agencies typically owe the Governor's Office
Fall	Budget estimates and requests, agency priorities and proposed agency bills for the coming session.
December to January	Transition briefings, board and appointment questions, and decisions on the legislative package.
February to May	Bill tracking, hearing preparation, fiscal notes and testimony. The Legislature's calendar drives everything.
After session	Bill signing and implementation plans, rulemaking and appropriation controls.
Any time	Board vacancies, executive orders, emergencies and constituent matters.

Common questions

Question	What to establish
Is this a request or a legal act?	Information, a recommendation, or an action that needs an appointment letter, signature, executive order or statute.
Who speaks for the Governor on this?	Which staff member is authorized for which subject, and whether the instruction is oral or written.
Can the Governor designate someone in their place?	Under §36-13-17, if an act of the Legislature makes the Governor a member of a multi-member body, the Governor may designate an individual to serve in the Governor's place, and the designee serves at the Governor's pleasure.
Can the Governor remove the person in question?	See Chapter 1. Section 36-13-7 reaches the Governor's own appointees in executive departments, except Merit System employees. HB220 reaches board members the Governor appointed. Neither reaches a person appointed by someone else.

The other elected statewide officers

The Alabama Constitution provides for elected executive officers beyond the Governor, including the Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, State Auditor, State Treasurer and Commissioner of Agriculture and Industries. Confirm the current list and each office's powers in the Constitution and the Code, because the officers' duties are set by their own statutes.

If your work touches...	Think about...	Do not assume...
Legal representation or an opinion on state law	The Attorney General's role relative to your own agency counsel.	That agency counsel and the Attorney General always agree, or that either can be skipped.
Elections, business filings, notary or registry functions	The Secretary of State's statutory functions.	That a request from the Governor's Office changes a filing rule.
State funds, deposits and warrants	The State Treasurer and the Department of Finance.	That an appropriation is cash available on your timeline.
Audits and property accountability	The State Auditor and the Examiners of Public Accounts.	That an audit finding is only a recommendation.
Agricultural and industry programs	The Commissioner of Agriculture and Industries.	That the Commissioner is a cabinet appointee.
Presiding over the Senate	The Lieutenant Governor's role in the legislative process.	That Senate scheduling is controlled by the executive branch.

CONFIRM

The table says where to look, not what each officer may do. Section 36-3-1 lists the seven statewide executive offices whose terms begin on installation day: Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, Auditor, Secretary of State, Treasurer, and Commissioner of Agriculture and Industries. Check each officer's duties in the Constitution and the officer's own statutes.

FIELD ADVICE

In the first two weeks, hold a short introductory call with the office of each officer whose work touches your agency. Ask one question: what do you need from us, and by when? Record the answer and the date. Relationships built before a dispute are worth more than a good memo during one.

Part III | Money, the Legislature and the Work of Governing

Four chapters on the budget, the Legislature, your people and your contracts, where most first-year trouble starts.

Chapter 7 | Money Is Policy: How to Read Your Agency's Budget

Most new appointees arrive with a list of things they want to change. The finance director can tell you which ones can be paid for. That is why the budget conversation belongs in the first week, not at the end of a strategic planning retreat.

Begin with three different numbers: the amount appropriated, the amount already committed and the amount legally available for a new purpose. A program may have a large appropriation and very little flexibility because payroll, matching obligations, federal grant restrictions, debt service or contracts already claim the funds. Another program may look underfunded while holding a restricted balance that cannot move to the priority you have in mind.

Alabama's General Fund and Education Trust Fund are distinct, but the practical issue is more specific than two names. For every proposed initiative, ask: Which fund pays? Which appropriation line authorizes it? Is it state or federal money? Is it recurring? Does it require a match? What happens when the grant ends? Is a transfer legally available? Who must approve the contract and the hiring?

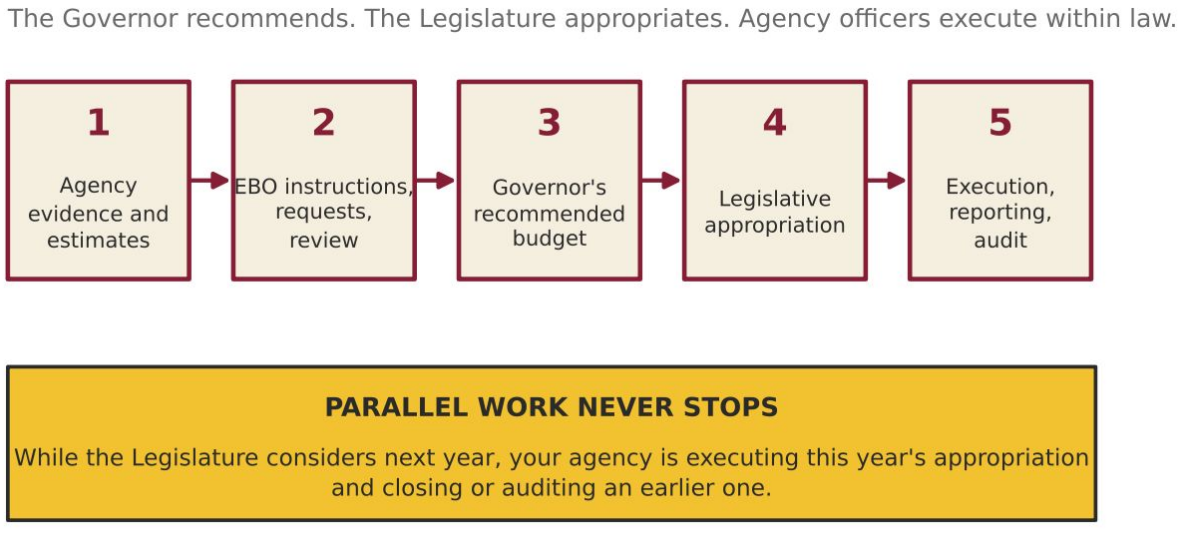


Figure 6. The Alabama budget conveyor

Do not confuse a budget request with spending authority. The Governor recommends. The Legislature enacts appropriations. Agency officers execute within law and

approved controls. Three separate documents are easy to confuse: the proposed budget the Constitution requires by the second legislative day, the program and financial plan message that §41-19-7 requires by the fifth legislative day, and the four-year strategic plan under §41-19-3(b). No agency head should assume that an executive directive alone can move restricted money or override a procurement rule.

The dates that matter

Date	Event	Basis
Nov 1, 2026	Agencies send expenditure estimates to Finance (first day of the third month before the session).	LAW, calculated: §41-4-84. The Executive Budget Office set 5 p.m. Nov 2, 2026 for fiscal year 2028 requests (OFFICIAL PRACTICE).
Nov 20, 2026	Finance sends the Governor-elect a summary of agency program and financial information.	LAW: §41-19-6(d).
Dec 1, 2026	Finance prepares the tentative budget and sends it to the Governor (first day of the second month before the session).	LAW, calculated: §41-4-86.
2nd legislative day	Governor transmits a proposed budget to the Legislature.	LAW: Const. §71.01(B).
5th legislative day	Governor delivers the program and financial plan message to a joint session, with an explanatory report.	LAW: §41-19-7. A separate duty from the budget transmittal.
Before the 2028 session	Four-year strategic plan presented to the Legislature and posted on the Governor's website.	LAW: §41-19-3(b).

An incoming agency head should also know how the budget is defended. The answer to a legislator cannot be a slogan. It needs an appropriation citation, a financial record and a credible explanation of what management can change. Section 41-19-12 addresses knowingly presenting false fiscal information to legislative committees.

DECISION TOOL | New team

Worked decision: you want a new statewide service team.

Do not start with an announcement or a staffing chart. Establish, in this order: the program's statutory authority; the recurring cost; the fund source; the classification and hiring path; technology and procurement approvals; federal program constraints; and how success will be measured.

FIELD ADVICE

Never let a press release be the first place your finance director hears about a new initiative. Get a written cost estimate and a lawful funding path before you promise an expansion.

Chapter 8 | The Legislature: How to Prepare, Testify and Keep Your Word

A new agency head can spend months building a program and lose credibility in ten minutes of testimony. The usual cause is not a hard question. It is an answer the agency's own records do not support, or a commitment that needs someone else's approval.

Before session, learn which committees control your authorizing statutes, appropriations and oversight. Meet the agency's legislative liaison and finance director. Read last year's budget hearings, recent bills affecting your programs, fiscal notes and recurring member requests. Ask counsel what can be released and what involves litigation, protected personnel records or confidential procurement.

> **LAW**
> Section 29-1-4 sets the regular session start on the first Tuesday in February in the first, second and third years of the legislative term, and the second Tuesday in January in the fourth year. For the term that begins in 2027, the first regular session starts Tuesday, February 2, 2027, by calculation. The Legislature meets in organizational session on the second Tuesday in January (January 12, 2027) for no more than 10 consecutive calendar days. A regular session may not run longer than 30 legislative days and 105 calendar days. Those are outer limits, not a scheduled adjournment date.

The session operating loop

Phase	What the agency does
Before session	Verify the budget, pending bills and committee jurisdiction.
During session	Track amendments, hearings and fiscal effects.
Before testimony	Reconcile facts, funding and legal authority.
After a hearing	Deliver documented follow-up.
After adjournment	Implement enacted law and appropriations.

Appropriations come first. Under §71.01(C) of the Constitution, other bills may not be signed by the presiding officers and sent to the other house until the basic appropriation bills have been signed and presented to the Governor. That affects when your own bill moves, and why a late budget slows everything else.

After a bill passes, track it as an act: passage in both houses, presentment to the Governor, signature or veto, act number, and the effective-date clause. Acts differ. SB71 took effect on approval, HB282 splits its sections between October 1, 2026 and immediately, and HB475 took effect June 1, 2026. Get the current signing, veto and

override timelines from the Governor's legal office before you plan around a bill's final date.

Separate the request from the decision. A legislator can ask for information, constituent assistance or a policy change. The request does not authorize a procurement award, permit, personnel action or benefit outside law. Treat a constituent inquiry seriously while protecting equal treatment. Record the request, the legal owner, the facts supplied and the response.

DECISION TOOL

Testimony rule. Tell the committee what is true, what is projected and what is unknown. If a number is preliminary, say so. If a proposal needs new money, say so. If a law prevents an immediate change, name the law and the alternatives. Do not hide a problem the committee will find in an audit or from an affected constituent. Carry the Hearing Card (Tool E).

FIELD ADVICE

Do not surprise the Governor's Office with a major policy commitment or a reversal of the administration's position. But a coordination request is not permission to give inaccurate testimony, withhold required information or promise a decision outside your authority. Write down who approved the agency position and who can answer the next question.

Chapter 9 | People: Lead Career Staff Without Mistaking Authority

Career employees can be a new administration's greatest source of operational knowledge. They may also be wary of leaders who arrive with a reorganization already drafted. Neither fact changes the Governor's priorities. The job is to turn lawful priorities into an operating plan the agency can actually carry out.

Ask for a staffing map showing approved positions, incumbents, vacancies, supervisors, classifications, critical skills and succession risk. Section 36-26-10 distinguishes exempt, unclassified and classified service. Section 36-26-17 governs ordinary merit certification for classified vacancies. Special statutes may apply to deputies and senior positions. Do not assume a senior title is available for political replacement, or that the agency head personally owns every personnel decision.

Meet the personnel director and counsel before changing reporting lines or ordering a reduction in force. Learn what is already under investigation, what performance process is required and which decisions need board or central personnel action. A lawful performance action should rest on actual service evidence, consistent standards and a documented process.

Exempt, unclassified and classified service, discipline and layoff

Three categories, three sets of rules. The exempt service, under §36-26-10(b), includes members of boards and commissions and heads of departments the law requires to be appointed by the Governor or by a board with the Governor's approval. Each agency may also designate a few additional exempt positions within the statute's limits, which may not be held by the agency head and may not displace classified employees. Classified employees are hired through merit certification and carry the process protections of the Merit System. Unclassified employees sit between the two. Before an action, ask personnel which category the person is in, who the appointing authority is and which process applies.

Question	Why it matters
Discipline or layoff?	Discipline rests on a person's conduct or performance and needs an individual record. A layoff or reduction in force rests on the agency's needs and follows different rules. Do not use one to do the other's job.
What appeal rights does the employee have?	Appeal rights depend on classification. Ask personnel for the current rule and the deadlines.
Who is the appointing authority?	The board, the director or the Governor may hold the power to hire and discipline. A board member's authority does not reach staff personally.
What does the Governor's Office have to approve?	Treat a Governor's Office request as coordination, not authority, unless a statute makes it approval.

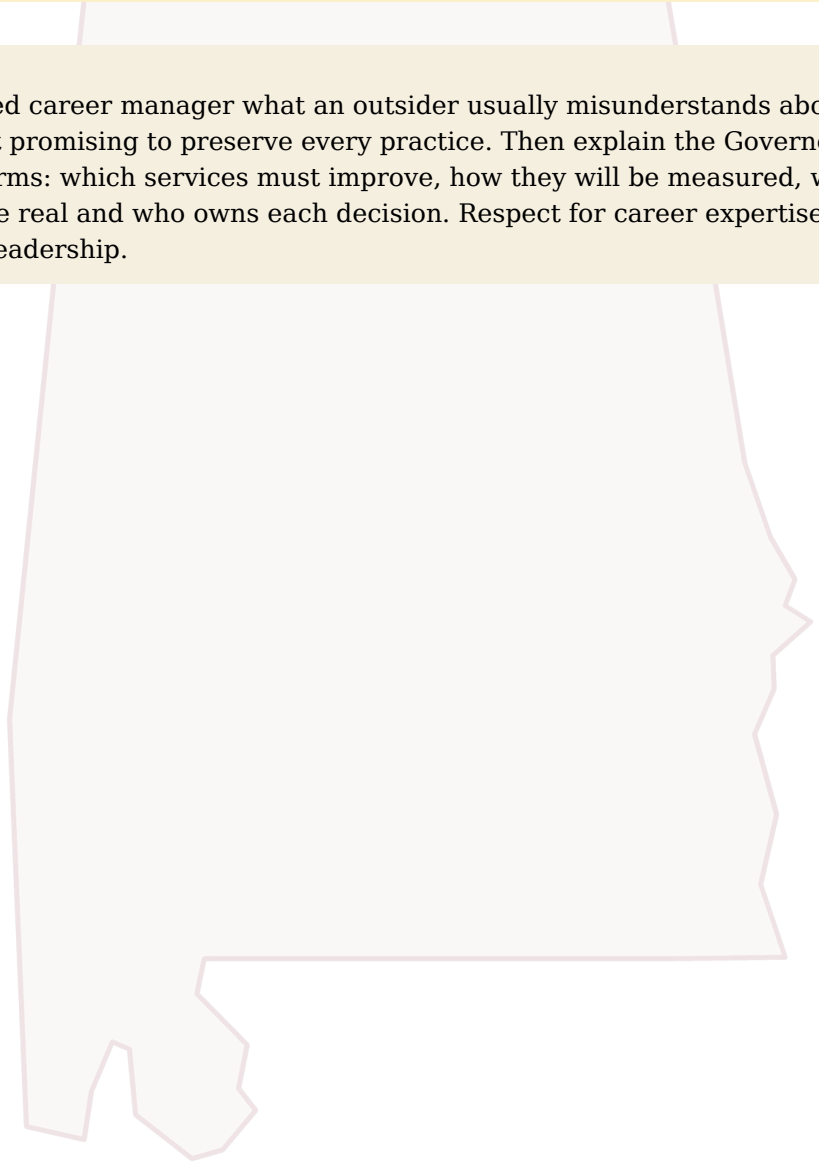
Two 2026 enactments touch hiring and leave for state employees. Act 2026-574 (HB307), effective January 1, 2027, amends §36-26-15 to give spouses of active duty service members additional points on ratings for state employment. Act 2026-559 (HB361), effective October 1, 2026, creates paid living donor leave. Both run through the State Personnel Department. Neither promises a political appointment.

CONFIRM

Get the current layoff and appeal rules and the full text of §36-26-10 from the State Personnel Department before you decide.

FIELD ADVICE

Ask a respected career manager what an outsider usually misunderstands about the agency. Listen without promising to preserve every practice. Then explain the Governor’s priorities in concrete terms: which services must improve, how they will be measured, what constraints are real and who owns each decision. Respect for career expertise is not surrender of leadership.



Chapter 10 | Contracts, Grants and Procurement: Where Good Intentions Get Expensive

A vendor's urgency is not an emergency procurement finding. A friendly recommendation is not a competitive evaluation. A grant award does not create permission to ignore the state budget. Establish these distinctions before you sign.

Alabama's procurement framework gives central functions to the Department of Finance's Division of Procurement and Chief Procurement Officer, subject to exemptions and delegations. The statute recognizes several methods, including competitive sealed bids and proposals, sole-source and emergency procedures. Which method is lawful depends on the transaction. Public works under Title 39 follow a different framework from many supplies and services.

Request the agency's current procurement delegation and thresholds, the active contract register and a list of sole-source and emergency awards. For each material transaction, identify the appropriation, method, evaluation record, conflict screening, legal review, required signatures, vendor performance measures, renewal date and records obligations. If the agency cannot explain its own contract approval chain, pause new discretionary commitments until it can.

Federal grants add another layer: match, reporting, subrecipient monitoring, audit, procurement, civil rights, environmental or program-specific requirements. Identify who is legally responsible for each condition. A Governor's priority cannot change a federal award's terms by press release.

Routing a contract

Step	Question to answer
1	Is the agency exempt from the central procurement framework, or has Finance delegated authority? Get the delegation in writing.
2	What method is lawful: competitive sealed bid, proposal, sole source or emergency? Title 39 public works follow a different framework.
3	Is it a contract for personal or professional services with a private entity or individual, paid from appropriated funds on a state warrant? If so, §29-2-41 requires review by the Contract Review Committee before the contract is made.
4	Have the funding certification, conflict screening and legal review been done?
5	Who has signing authority, and has the record been built to support an audit?

LAW | Legislative contract review

Under §29-2-41, as amended in 2023, a department submits a proposed personal or professional services contract, or a letter of intent, with an itemized cost estimate, to the Contract Review Committee. The committee must hold a hearing within a reasonable time not exceeding 45 days after submission. If it does not, the contract is deemed reviewed. A contract made in violation of the section, without prior review, is void ab initio.

The statute reaches contracts the committee has notified departments about and personal or professional services paid from appropriated funds. Counsel should confirm whether a given contract is inside the section.

Records of public contracts carry a new duty. Under Act 2026-592 (SB272), a custodian who produces records relating to a public contract for goods or services in response to a public records request must redact account numbers, tax identification numbers, routing numbers, employee identification numbers, sensitive personal identifying information and similar information that could be used to initiate a financial transaction. Build that into the records workflow (Chapter 13).

CONFIRM

Dollar thresholds for competitive bidding, delegated limits and the emergency procedure change. Get the current figures from the agency procurement officer.

DECISION TOOL

When someone says “we have to sign today,” ask for the contract, funding certification, procurement determination and written approval route. The answer may be that the action is lawful and urgent. It may also be that the deadline was known for six months and no one managed it. Those are different management problems.

Part IV | The Rules That Can Hurt You

Ethics, public records, open meetings and rulemaking, plus a chapter for people who serve on a board, not just run an agency, and a short chapter on technology.

Chapter 11 | Ethics: Fix the Conflict Before It Becomes a Decision

Most ethics trouble begins before anyone uses the word “ethics.” A former client calls about a permit. A family business wants a meeting. A vendor offers hospitality during a procurement. An appointee assumes that disclosing a relationship makes participation safe. Disclosure is not permission. Each situation deserves a fact-specific answer before the official acts.

Section 36-25-5 restricts use of public office for personal gain. Other provisions address things of value, lobbying, associated businesses, financial disclosure and post-employment conduct. The legal definitions matter. Do not decide whether a benefit is permissible by comparing it to what other officials accept. Ask agency counsel or the Ethics Commission for the authority, and document the answer.

The conflict check

1. Identify the private interest or offered benefit.
2. Disclose through the authorized process.
3. Identify the statute and the government decision affected.
4. Obtain written advice from agency counsel or the Ethics Commission.
5. Apply recusal, divestiture or another lawful remedy.
6. Preserve the determination and monitor new facts.

Training: separate duties, separate clocks

Who	Requirement	Source and status
State constitutional officers, cabinet members and executive staff “as determined by the Governor”	Live ethics training held within the first 30 days after the Governor has been sworn in. The Commission’s Executive Director sets the specific date with the advice of the Governor and other constitutional officers. If the Governor is sworn in January 18, 2027, the 30th day is February 17, the outer date.	LAW: §36-25-4.2(a)(2). The February 17 date is our calculation, and the actual date may be earlier.
The same group, after a change in the Ethics Law	An additional program held within three months of the effective date of the change.	LAW: §36-25-4.2(a)(2). The section was last amended by Act 2025-49.
Public employees who must file a Statement of Economic Interests	An online educational review. Employees hired after January 1, 2011 have 90 days.	LAW: §36-25-4.2(e). The 90-day clock is separate from the 30-day executive training.

Who	Requirement	Source and status
Appointees who arrive after the Governor's swearing in	The statute sets no separate clock, and the Commission's education page states none for later arrivals.	See the note below.

CONFIRM

For a later appointee, ask the Commission's training staff which program to attend and when, and keep the answer in writing. If you are on the Governor's executive staff list, the 30-day training applies to you.

Filing: the Statement of Economic Interests

The annual statement is due no later than April 30 and covers the preceding calendar year, so the statement due April 30, 2027 covers calendar year 2026. The duty to file rests on the person. Under §36-25-14(a), two kinds of trigger can put you on the list, and an unpaid seat does not take you off it.

Trigger	Who it reaches
Pay-based	A person appointed as a public official, and any state, county or municipal public employee, whose base pay is $75,000 or more a year, as adjusted by the Commission for inflation by January 31 each year. A public employee earning less than the adjusted figure need not file unless another provision requires it.
Office- and duty-based	All elected officials. Members of the Ethics Commission. Appointed members of boards and commissions with statewide jurisdiction, but not members of solely advisory boards. Full-time nonmerit employees other than maintenance, clerical and similar staff. Directors and assistant directors of state agencies. Chief financial and accounting directors. Chief grant coordinators. Purchasing and procurement agents with authority to make any purchase. Anyone whose primary duty is investing public funds. Every full-time public employee serving as a supervisor. The statute lists more.
Candidates	Candidates file under §36-25-15.

A board member can be a filer because of the seat, not the pay. If you serve on a statewide board and the board is not solely advisory, plan to file even if you are unpaid.

OFFICIAL PRACTICE | Salary figure

The Commission's December 3, 2025 minutes, adopted $106,000 as the inflation-adjusted salary figure for the 2026 cycle. The statute calls for a new adjustment by January 31 each year, so the figure for the April 30, 2027 filing was not yet set as of November 10, 2026. Do not project $106,000 forward.

CONFIRM

Which category covers your role, and whether the 2027 figure puts your pay above or below the line, depends on your seat. Ask the Commission's ethics administrator in writing, and keep private financial information off any open transition drive. A recusal that removes you from half the job is not a small detail, so identify pervasive conflicts before you accept.

Gifts and things of value

Alabama defines "thing of value" broadly. It reaches gifts, favors, services, tickets to entertainment or sporting events, unsecured loans, rewards, promises of future employment and honoraria. Value is generally fair market price, or face value for a ticket.

> **LAW | Gifts**
>
> Section 36-25-5.1 bars a lobbyist, a lobbyist's subordinates and a principal from giving a thing of value to a public employee, a public official or a family member. It bars those same people from soliciting or receiving one. The exception is a thing of "de minimis" value.
>
> On December 3, 2025 the Ethics Commission set the de minimis figures at $35 per occasion and $70 per calendar year from any one provider. Meals have their own limits in the Act: $25 per meal and $150 per year from a lobbyist, and $50 per meal and $250 per year from a principal. Confirm current figures with the Commission before relying on them.

The statute lists items that are not things of value. They include reported campaign contributions, gifts from family or from friends whose friendship clearly predates your office, greeting cards and plaques, discounts open to the public or to all government employees, items a government entity pays for, and travel and food at qualifying educational or economic development functions. None of these exceptions applies if you must take a particular action in return. Separately, §36-25-5(e) bars you from soliciting a thing of value from a subordinate, or from a person or business you inspect, regulate or supervise, except in the ordinary course of business.

> **FIELD ADVICE**
>
> When an offer is not clearly inside an exception, ask the Ethics Commission before you accept, and keep the answer in writing.

Lobbyists and your calendar

A lobbyist, in the statute's terms, is a person paid or reimbursed to lobby, a person who lobbies as a regular part of the job, or a government consultant employed to influence legislation or regulation. A principal is the person or business that employs or retains a lobbyist. The definition excludes elected officials acting within their duties, attorneys giving professional advice, and agency heads sharing information about their agency's policies, so an agency head's routine testimony is not lobbying. Expect lobbyists and principals to be on your calendar from the first week. Everything in the gift rules applies to them.

Political activity

Alabama protects the political rights of state employees, classified or unclassified, but draws a hard line at state time and state resources.

- **What you may do.** Under §17-1-4, state employees may take part in political activity to the same extent as any other citizen. They may endorse candidates, contribute to campaigns, join political clubs and parties, and support issues and petitions. Classified employees must also comply with §36-26-38.

- **What you may not do.** Under §17-17-5, no public employee may use public funds, property or work time for political activities. Political action takes place on approved leave or personal time. An officer or employee may not solicit campaign contributions from subordinates or pressure them to work on a campaign or cause. The statute also bars arranging payroll deductions for political action committees. A violation is the crime of trading in public office.
- **State property.** Section 36-25-5(c) bars using public equipment, facilities, time, materials, labor or other property under your control for your own or another person's private or business benefit, including a principal campaign committee, with narrow exceptions.

CONFIRM

If federal funds pay any of your salary, the federal Hatch Act (5 U.S.C. §§1501-1508) may bar you from partisan candidacy. Ask counsel before any campaign work.

FIELD ADVICE

Keep campaign and official life on separate email accounts, phones, calendars and social media accounts from the first day.

Family members and nepotism

Section 36-25-5(a) bars using your office to obtain personal gain for yourself, a family member or a business with which you are associated. For a public official, "family member" covers a spouse, a dependent, an adult child and that child's spouse, a parent, a spouse's parents, and a sibling and that sibling's spouse. For a public employee, it covers a spouse or dependent. A business is "associated" with you if you or a family member is an officer, owner, partner, board member or employee, or holds more than 5 percent of its value.

The Ethics Commission has applied that rule to hiring. In one opinion, an official could not hire a sibling full time. A relative hired before the official took office, with no role by the official, could stay. The relative could receive no raise, travel or other benefit that was not open to similarly situated employees, and the official could not change the relative's status, for example from part time to full time. Ask counsel before you hire, promote or supervise a relative.

Other sections to know

The Ethics Act also addresses using or attempting to use office for personal gain and taking anything to influence official action (§36-25-7), using confidential information for private gain (§36-25-8), serving on or voting on matters involving a business you are tied to (§36-25-9), and representing paid clients before a state board, commission or agency, which requires written notice to the Commission within 10 days of the first appearance (§36-25-10). Section 36-25-11 restricts contracts paid from public funds. After you leave, §36-25-13 imposes restrictions of generally two years on lobbying and representing clients before your former agency, contracting with it, and joining a business you regulated (Chapter 19). Check the current Code, ask the Commission for an advisory opinion, and have counsel review any situation close to a line.

Chapter 12 | Travel, State Property and Administrative Rules

Small administrative rules cause some of the quickest trouble for new appointees. Nobody gets indicted over a mileage claim, but a reporter will read a travel log. Learn the routine rules in the first month and ask your chief fiscal officer for the agency's own policies.

Travel

- **Approval comes first.** The Comptroller's travel guidance says the agency head approves travel requests, and the Governor approves them for agency heads. The approval comes before booking or charging to the state travel card.
- **Requests live in the state's travel system.** A request is required for out-of-state events and for in-state events that qualify for actual-expense reimbursement. Charges should not be made more than 60 days ahead. An expense that is not on the approved request will not be reimbursed. Choose the correct in-state or out-of-state policy, or the expense report will be blocked.
- **Meals and incidentals** for out-of-state travel come from the federal CONUS rate for the city and dates of the travel.
- **Mileage** for personal vehicles was 76.0 cents per mile effective July 1, 2026, according to the Comptroller.
- **In-state per diem.** Section 36-7-20 lets the Governor set a uniform daily rate of at least $75. There is no meal allowance for trips under six hours. A trip of six to 12 hours without an overnight stay earns 15 percent of the regular rate. An employee stationed at the same place for more than two consecutive months receives 75 percent. An agency may choose whether to apply the section for required training, group functions and emergency assignments.
- **Pay the travel card on time.** The Comptroller's guidance warns that late payment accrues interest.

State vehicles and aircraft

State policy bars personal use of a state vehicle other than commuting, and commuting use is taxable income. As of the Comptroller's October 2025 memo, an employee earning under $183,100 who is not an elected official is valued at $3.00 per commuting day. Control employees, meaning those earning $183,100 or more and elected officials, use the IRS lease-value or cents-per-mile method. Each department reports commuting use to the Comptroller and notifies an employee within 30 days of receiving a vehicle. Law enforcement vehicles are exempt from the reporting. The Risk Management Division handles automobile liability separately from the General Liability Trust Fund.

Section 36-13-16 requires the Governor to post flight logs of state aircraft online each quarter, showing departure date, destination, purpose, a manifest of all passengers and the return date. The Examiners of Public Accounts audit aircraft use each year. If you fly on a state aircraft, your name and the purpose of the trip become public.

Other routine rules

Subject	Ask your chief fiscal officer or counsel
Gifts of travel and meals	Whether an educational or economic development function qualifies under the Ethics Act exception before the trip is booked (Chapter 11).
Purchasing cards and travel cards	The agency's card policy, limits and who reviews statements.
Outside work and speaking fees	Whether the engagement is allowed and whether you must disclose it. Honoraria are a thing of value under the Ethics Act.
State devices and accounts	Which devices and accounts are state-owned, and where official communications must be kept (Chapter 13).
Records of your trips and spending	Travel, vehicle and card records are public records and may be requested.

CONFIRM

Rates, thresholds and approval routes change every year. Take figures in this chapter as a starting point and get the current ones from your agency's chief fiscal officer or the Comptroller's office.

Chapter 13 | Public Records, Private Devices and the Clock

Your first week can create records that outlast your tenure. Email, messages, working documents and decisions may be public records or subject to retention rules because of what they contain, not which device carried them. A personal phone is not a records exemption, and an exemption does not authorize destruction. Retention and disclosure are separate questions.

Section 36-12-44 sets two request tracks. The clocks below are in business days unless noted. A request that needs clarification starts over as a new request when the requester clarifies, under Act 2024-278. An agency may require payment of fees before searching, and need not respond to a request too vague to act on.

	Standard request	Time-intensive request
Acknowledge	Within 10 business days.	Within 10 business days.
Designate	Not applicable.	Notify the requester within 15 business days after acknowledging that the request is time-intensive, with the fees, and a chance to withdraw.
Respond	Within 15 business days after acknowledging.	Within 45 business days after the requester elects to proceed.
Extend	Written notice, in 15-business-day increments.	Written notice, in 45-business-day increments.
Presumed denial	At the earlier of 30 business days or 60 calendar days after acknowledgment, or after the fee is paid for production.	At the earlier of 180 business days or 270 calendar days.
Log	Record the dates.	The agency keeps a confidential log of pending time-intensive requests.

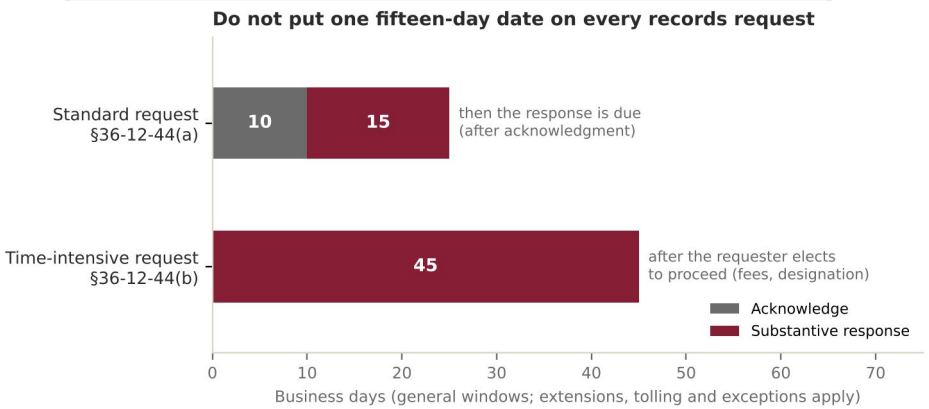


Figure 7. The records clock: standard versus time-intensive requests

A workflow that survives a transition

1. Log the request on the day it arrives, with the requester, date and exact words.

2. Route it to the named custodian and agency counsel. Staff do not answer on their own.
3. Acknowledge within 10 business days. Ask for clarification only if it is needed.
4. Decide the track and send the time-intensive notice and fee estimate if it applies.
5. Preserve everything that could be responsive, including messages on personal devices used for agency business, until the request is closed.
6. Search, review and apply exemptions with counsel. Redact what the law requires.
7. Respond in writing, or extend in writing before the deadline.
8. Record the final response, the dates and any presumed-denial date.

Redactions have a new rule. Under Act 2026-592, records relating to a public contract for goods or services must have account numbers, tax identification numbers, routing numbers, employee identification numbers, sensitive personal identifying information and similar information redacted before they are produced. Another section of that act bars anyone from knowingly selling, giving or receiving a list of names and addresses taken from records requested from a local board of education in order to sell or offer property or services to the people listed. A knowing violation carries a civil penalty of up to $500 per violation, enforced by the Attorney General. It is not a state-agency rule, but it matters to any firm that prospects from public records.

An agency needs an assigned custodian, a current Records Disposition Authority and a documented litigation-hold process. The Alabama Department of Archives and History publishes state records-retention guidance.

CONFIRM

Whether a message on a personal device is a public record turns on its content and use, and counsel decides. Preserve first, decide later. Ask counsel which exemptions apply to a given request.

FIELD ADVICE

Set a rule on day one: agency business goes through approved systems, significant decisions are recorded, and staff know whom to call when a records request or preservation notice arrives. The easiest records problem to fix is the one you prevented before a crisis.

Chapter 14 | Boards, Open Meetings and Rulemaking

A board chair, a commissioner and an agency director can sit at the same table and still hold different powers. Before a meeting, determine which body is acting, whether it has a quorum, whether public notice is required, who may vote and what can lawfully be discussed in executive session. An informal email chain is not a substitute for an open meeting where the law requires one.

Open meetings checklist

- **Which body is acting?** A board, a committee of the board, or staff. Only a body can hold a meeting.
- **Is notice required?** Under §36-25A-3, a regular meeting needs notice at least seven calendar days ahead (statewide bodies go through the Secretary of State). Other meetings need 24 hours, and a true emergency as little as one hour. We confirmed the shorter branches from a checklist and a League of Municipalities guide, not a full reading. Ask counsel which applies.
- **Is the body solely advisory and unpaid?** An advisory body created solely to make policy recommendations, whose members receive no public-funds compensation for their service, is excepted from that notice rule.
- **Is there a quorum, an agenda and a record?** Keep minutes of what was decided and who voted.
- **Is a closed session lawful?** Only for a purpose the Open Meetings Act allows. Ask counsel before the meeting, not after.

CONFIRM

Notice periods, what counts as a meeting and the permitted purposes for executive session vary by body. Ask board counsel for the section and exception that applies.

Rulemaking

Rulemaking resists shortcuts. A rule that misses a filing deadline is invalid, and the clocks run from published notice.

Step	What the statute requires
1. Authority and text	Confirm the statute that supports the rule, and decide whether this is a rule, an internal policy or something that needs a statute.
2. Notice	At least 35 days' notice, published in the Alabama Administrative Monthly. The notice period ends not less than 35 and not more than 90 days after the notice date. The notice says whether the rule relates to litigation the agency is party to.
3. Business impact analysis	If one is required, prepare it and file it with the certified rule.

Step	What the statute requires
4. Filing	The agency secretary files a certified copy with the Legislative Services Agency no later than 15 days after the filing with the agency secretary and within 90 days after the notice period ends. A late filing makes the rule invalid.
5. Effective date	Generally 45 days after publication of notice that the certified rule has been filed, unless a statute or the rule sets another date, or the rule is an emergency rule, or the committee acts under §41-22-23.
6. Emergency rule	Only for an immediate danger to public health, safety or welfare, or a federal requirement. The agency states its reasons in writing to the committee. The rule takes effect on filing, lasts no longer than 120 days and cannot be renewed.

LAW | Judicial review

Act 2026-319 (SB167), effective October 1, 2026, adds a subsection to §41-22-20 on judicial review of final decisions in contested cases. When interpreting a statute or rule, the court may consider, but shall not defer to, an agency's interpretation, and shall interpret its meaning and effect without a presumption of correctness. In an action brought by or against an agency, after applying the customary tools of interpretation, the court shall resolve any remaining doubt in favor of a reasonable interpretation.

The section keeps its rule that an agency's weighing of evidence on questions of fact is not replaced by the court's judgment

LAW | Environmental rule limits

Act 2026-81 (SB71), effective February 19, 2026, limits an agency's authority to adopt numeric criteria for a chemical substance, in rules on drinking water, water pollution control, hazardous substances, contaminated site remediation, air quality, solid waste and hazardous waste, that are more stringent or extensive than federal law on the same or a similar topic. Where there is no federal standard, a rule must rest on the best available science and the weight of scientific evidence, per substance. No agency may set EPA IRIS values as the default or be required to use them in numeric water quality criteria. An agency with a rule that sets an IRIS default must revise its rules to comply no later than nine months after the effective date, which is November 19, 2026.

Exceptions include rules required by federal law, rules that are less stringent or substantively equivalent, repeals, and emergency rules under §41-22-5.

FIELD ADVICE

If a policy promise requires changing a rule, tell the Governor's Office and affected parties what the lawful process and likely dependencies are. Do not announce that a regulation has disappeared because someone signed a directive to review it.

Chapter 15 | If You Are Joining a Board or Commission

Many appointees will not run an agency. They will hold one seat on a board. The duties, limits and risks are different. Ordinarily, a board member holds power only when the board acts as a body, at a lawful meeting, with a quorum. You do not hold a staff member's authority, and you do not give the executive director an instruction as an individual unless the statute says you may. That difference is the one new board members most often get wrong.

Before your first meeting

Ask for	Why it matters
The statute that creates your seat: term, holdover, qualifications, appointing authority, Senate consent.	Seats differ in who fills them and how long they last (Chapter 1).
Whether Act 2026-555 (HB220) covers your seat.	If you were appointed by one of the six named officials to a board of individual members, the appointing official may remove you at any time. See the four tests in Chapter 1.
Bylaws, quorum rule, officer roles and committee structure.	A vote without a quorum is not a board act.
The last twelve months of minutes and the open-meeting notice practice.	Shows what the board decides and whether it follows notice rules (Chapter 14).
The director's delegation, the board's reserved powers and the budget the board approves.	Separates policy from administration.
Pay, per diem and expense rules for members.	Set by each board's statute and bylaws.
Ethics category, training and filing obligations for members.	Statewide board members file unless the board is solely advisory (Chapter 11).
The liability protection confirmation for your board (Chapter 2).	Whether appointed members are within the entity's Fund participation is not answered by the sources. Get it in writing.
Litigation, consent orders and pending contested cases.	Members who adjudicate must be careful about outside contact.

Five habits of a good board member

- **Act as a body.** Decisions come from votes in a noticed meeting. Side agreements and email chains do not count.
- **Keep staff and board roles apart.** Ask questions through the chair or the agreed channel. Do not direct staff privately.
- **Disclose and recuse early.** If a matter touches a former client, relative or business, raise it before the agenda item and get advice.

- **Be careful with contested matters.** If the board decides licenses, permits or discipline, report private contact from an interested party to board counsel. Report a threatened claim to Risk Management at once, not after a suit.
- **Preserve records.** Board communications can be public records wherever they live (Chapter 13).

FIELD ADVICE

Ask board counsel, in your first week, for a one-page list of what members may not do alone. It is the most useful page a new member can have.

CONFIRM

Board powers, quorum, per diem and member discipline come from each board's own statute and bylaws.



Chapter 16 | Technology, Cybersecurity and Artificial Intelligence

An agency head does not need to be the chief technologist. An agency head does need to know who owns the systems, which services cannot fail, which vendors have access to sensitive information and who can make an emergency decision. Ask for an inventory of major applications, contracts, data, backups, access controls, known incidents and systems nearing end of support.

Alabama's Office of Information Technology has statewide functions subject to statutory exclusions and special arrangements. Do not assume an independent entity follows every enterprise approval rule the same way. Check the current OIT governance library, the agency's authority and the procurement path before buying software or changing a security service.

Artificial intelligence can support administrative work, but an unapproved external service is not a safe destination for personnel files, investigative material or protected applications. Before a pilot, define the legal authority, data classification, vendor retention, records created, human review, testing, appeal implications, accessibility and contracting approval. A machine-generated recommendation does not replace a legally authorized decision-maker.

FIELD ADVICE

Start with the systems that keep services running and the people who know how to restore them. A glossy technology announcement will not help when the agency cannot process payroll or permit applications.

Part V | Building a Governing Rhythm

A hundred days without theater, a crisis chapter with a first-hour card, and how to leave well.

Chapter 17 | Your First Hundred Days, Without the Theater

A hundred-day plan is useful only if it tells the agency what decisions will be made, what evidence will be used and who owns the work. A list of speeches, meetings and announcements is not a management plan. Nor is a promise to fix a statutory problem that requires the Legislature.

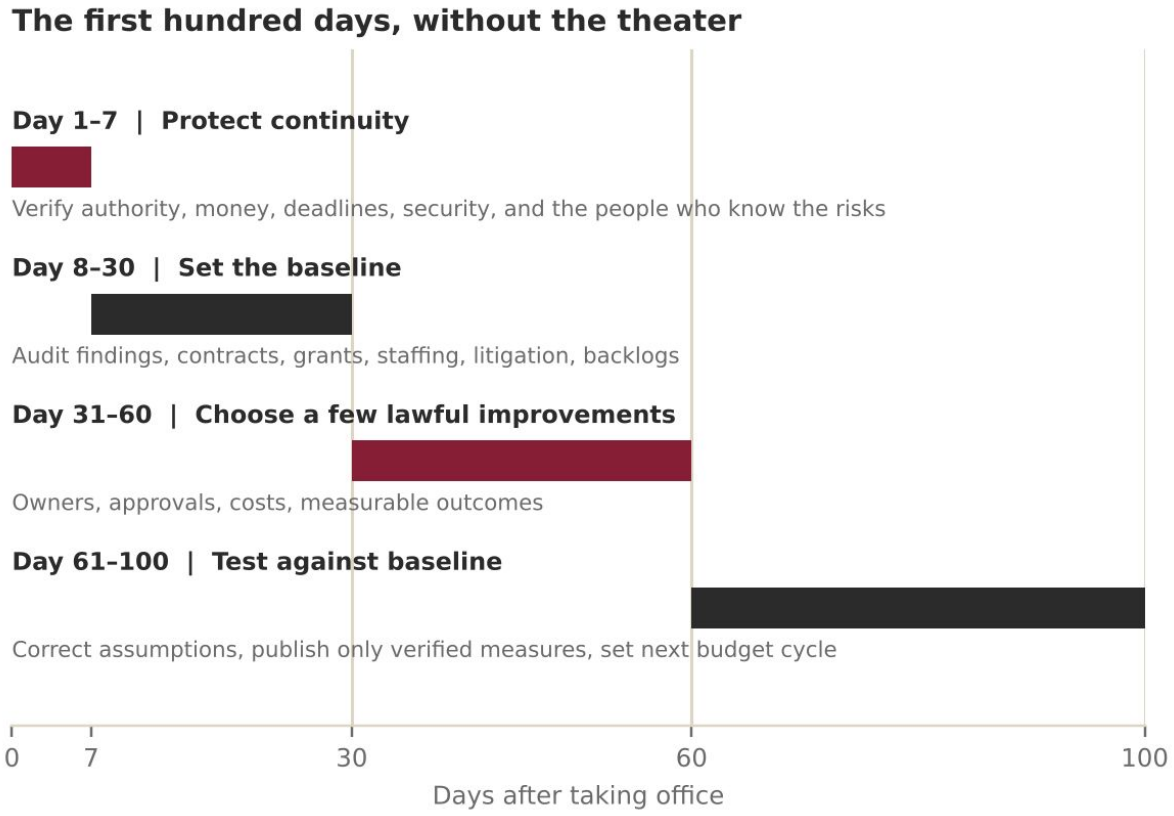


Figure 8. The first hundred days

Run a short weekly operating meeting. Every item should show a decision needed, owner, due date, source of authority, budget effect and evidence of progress. A useful dashboard might track permit processing time, program backlog, service availability, cash exposure, critical vacancies, audit remediation and pending legal decisions. Metrics will differ by agency. Their credibility should not.

Establish two escalation channels. Operational incidents need an immediate path to the responsible executive. Policy questions requiring the Governor's Office, an

independent board, Finance, the Legislature or another agency need a separate decision route. Mixing them means urgent operational matters wait for a political meeting, and policy commitments get made without the proper legal approval.

FIELD ADVICE

Protect the staff who bring bad news early. Require them to show the underlying record. Do not reward an optimistic dashboard that makes the problem harder to solve. The first hundred days should end with a more honest understanding of the agency than you had on day one.

Chapter 18 | Crises, Communications and Cross-Agency Work

A crisis does not respect the boundary between communications and operations. Establish who has incident command, who can shut down a system, who calls law enforcement or emergency management, who speaks publicly, and who preserves the record. The answer may change by incident type. Do not invent a universal chain of command.

Use plain distinctions in public statements: what happened, what is verified, what is being investigated, what the agency has authority to do and when the next update will occur. Do not turn an allegation into a finding or a proposed appropriation into a funded program. Protect information the law requires you to protect, without using "confidential" as a substitute for legal analysis.

Who decides what, in the first hour

Question	Decide in advance	Check with
Who is incident lead?	One named person per incident type, plus a backup.	Agency head, counsel.
Who can take a system offline or close a facility?	Named role and the written trigger.	Security lead, OIT where it applies.
Who contacts law enforcement or emergency management?	Named role, phone tree.	Counsel.
Who speaks publicly?	One spokesperson. Staff refer all inquiries.	Communications lead, Governor's Office coordination.
Who preserves the record?	A named custodian and a litigation hold.	Records custodian, counsel (Chapter 13).
Who reports a possible claim?	Anyone who may be sued reports in writing to Risk Management as soon as practicable, and suit papers go to the department director at once.	Department director, counsel, Risk Management (Chapter 2).
Who tells the board, Governor's Office and affected agencies?	Notification list with times.	Chief of staff.

Cross-agency projects

Intergovernmental projects need the same discipline. A state department cannot promise local zoning approval, utility capacity, an independent port decision or a federal permit. Build a dependency map that names each decision, legal owner, funding source, deadline, evidence and contingency. Meet partners early, but do not mistake a meeting for a binding agreement. If an announcement depends on several agencies, say what is authorized, what is pending and who owns the next step.

Chapter 19 | Leaving Office: Hand Off the Institution, Not Just the Keys

Departures are easy to postpone until the last week. That is when records are scattered, contracts are unsigned and the successor does not know which matters need attention. Start the handoff early enough to identify acting authority, unresolved decisions, litigation holds, critical contacts, upcoming deadlines and the location of official records.

Section 36-25-13 contains distinct post-employment restrictions, several involving two-year periods. They are not one universal two-year ban. Application depends on the former role, actual duties, agency, contracts, representation and statutory exceptions. Before negotiating a private role involving the former agency, get a documented legal assessment.

Return equipment, keys, purchasing cards and government records. Revoke access. Reconcile payroll, leave, insurance and retirement. Transfer open matters to authorized custodians. A personal archive of agency email is not a departure plan. The successor needs a decision log and the underlying records in approved systems.

Before you leave, ask Risk Management in writing whether a claim made after your departure for an act during your service is covered, and keep the answer with your copy of the Liability Confirmation Checklist (Chapter 2). Ask counsel how a former official gets access to records for a later claim. Do not carry agency records home.

> **FIELD ADVICE**
> The measure of a good departure is whether the agency can make the next lawful decision without calling the person who left.

Desk Reference | Take These Pages to the Meeting

Sixteen tools, built to be printed and filled in by hand, with space to write. They are working aids, not official Alabama forms. “Not determined” is not the same as “none.”

Tool A | Appointment Due-Diligence Worksheet

OFFICE AND AUTHORITY

Exact title	**Agency or board**
Creating statute	**Appointing authority**
Senate consent required? (Y/N, source)	**Authority before consent**
Term	**Holdover rule**
Who may remove, and under which source	**Grounds and procedure**
Who appoints a replacement	**Interim authority if start is delayed**

HB220 TESTS (CHAPTER 1)

1. Board of individual members under state law? (Y/N)	**2. Appointed by one of the six named officials? (Y/N)**
3. Excluded by subsection (e)? (Y/N)	**4. Any other law that limits it?**

OATH, FILING AND READINESS

Oath, commission or bond, and where filed	**Ethics training and filing category**
Classification and written pay basis	**Insurance and retirement determinations**
Liability Confirmation attached (date)	**Conditions outstanding**

DECISION [ ] Accept [ ] Accept subject to written conditions [ ] Decline [ ] Pending legal determination

Earliest lawful start date	**Reviewer (agency counsel) and evidence date**

Tool B | Transition Personnel Tracker

Two tables, because personnel milestones and confirmation milestones are different things. Do not label anyone “confirmed” without the enacted-law basis and the record. Keep personal financial, background and screening material in access-controlled systems, separate from this tracker.

PERSONNEL MILESTONES

Position	Classification	Offer date	Pay basis	Benefits determinations	Start date	Owner

CONFIRMATION AND APPOINTMENT MILESTONES

Seat	Statute	Appointed (date)	Consent needed?	Sent to Senate	Senate action	Authority until then	Owner

Status vocabulary: identified, under review, offer conditional, appointment instrument signed, Senate action pending, oath filed, onboarding underway, declined or withdrawn. Do not describe anyone as legally in office until every date in the milestone tables is filled.

Tool C | The First-Week Briefing Request

Ask the agency for one concise package. Every section carries a source date, and the outgoing agency head certifies the package as complete as of a date. Do not demand a 200-page binder.

Section	Ask for	Source date
1. Mission and law	Enabling statutes, required services, major regulations, board or independent-authority relationships.	
2. People	Organization chart, authorized positions, critical vacancies, succession, classifications, current delegations.	
3. Money	Appropriations by fund, obligations, restricted funds, grants, match requirements, year-end projections.	
4. Risk	Material litigation, consent orders, audits, investigations, safety issues, cybersecurity, records holds, claims reported to Risk Management.	
5. Contracts and grants	Top commitments, renewals, expiring awards, vendor dependencies, Contract Review Committee submissions pending.	
6. Performance	Service measures, backlogs, complaints, data gaps and deadlines.	
7. Decisions	What must be signed or escalated in 7, 30 and 90 days, with the legal owner named.	

Outgoing agency head (certifies package complete as of)	**Date**
Receiving official	**Date received**

Tool D | Decision Log and Weekly Operating Card

Decision or problem	**Mission outcome**
Authority and source	**Facts verified as of**
Options	**Budget effect**
Personnel effect	**Required approvals**
Responsible official	**Next action and deadline**
Public communication owner	**Evidence of result**

DECISIONS ALREADY MADE BEFORE YOU ARRIVED

Decision	Made by, date	Reversible? Who can reverse it?	Commitments created

Weekly meeting rule. Bring the decision and the record. If the action depends on a board, Finance, a federal grantor or the Legislature, put that dependency on the card. Do not write “coordination ongoing” where a named decision-maker and date belong.

Tool E | Budget and Legislative Hearing Card

Program and statutory mission	**Fund (General Fund, Education Trust Fund or other)**
Appropriation line	**Fiscal year**
Authorized amount	**Spent (actual)**
Encumbered	**Forecast to year end**
Restricted balance	**Federal match**
Recurring or one-time	**Second-year cost**
Pending bill or amendment	**Official who can produce records**

Before testimony. Is the number actual or forecast? Has Finance reconciled it? Is the change lawful without legislation? What does it cost in the second year? Who has authority to make the promise? What evidence can be produced if challenged?

Tool F | Deadline Register

Fixed dates come from a statute or act. Calculated dates come from a formula. Operating dates come from an office's notice. Future items depend on an event. Add your own rows, with an owner.

Deadline	Type	Source	Owner	Done
Nov 1, 2026: estimates to Finance	Calculated	§41-4-84		
Nov 19, 2026: SB71 nine-month date	Calculated	Act 2026-81 §1(e)		
Nov 20, 2026: Finance summary to Governor-elect	Fixed	§41-19-6(d)		
Dec 1, 2026: tentative budget to Governor	Calculated	§41-4-86		
Jan 12, 2027: organizational session	Calculated	§29-1-4		
Jan 18, 2027: installation	Calculated	§36-3-1		
Jan 19, 2027: Secretary of Energy begins	Fixed	Act 2026-345		
Feb 1, 2027: Superintendent of Banks term ends	Calculated	§5-2A-3		
Feb 2, 2027: session opens	Calculated	§29-1-4		
By Feb 17, 2027: executive ethics training (outer date)	Calculated	§36-25-4.2(a)(2)		
2nd legislative day: proposed budget	Triggered	Const. §71.01(B)		
5th legislative day: program and financial plan	Triggered	§41-19-7		
Mar 1, 2027: Pardons and Paroles terms begin	Fixed	Act 2026-403		
Apr 30, 2027: Statement of Economic Interests	Fixed	§36-25-14		

Tool G | Who to Call First

Write the escalation owner for your own agency in the last column.

Subject	Start with	Basis	Escalation owner
Appointment, term, removal	Appointing authority and agency counsel.	Chapter 1; creating statute	
Senate consent or interim authority	Governor's legal office and the Senate's secretary or clerk.	Creating statute	
Classification, hiring, leave	Agency human resources and the State Personnel Department.	§36-26-10	
Salary, appropriation, budget request	Agency finance director, Executive Budget Office and Department of Finance.	§§41-4-84, 41-4-86	
Liability protection and claims	Risk Management Division, Department of Finance; department director; Attorney General.	§36-1-6.1; GLTF Guidelines	
Insurance and enrollment	State Employees' Insurance Board and the employer benefits administrator.	Board rate sheet	
Retirement and service credit	Retirement Systems of Alabama and the employing agency.	§36-27-49.4	
Ethics, SOEI, training, post-employment	Ethics Commission and agency counsel.	§§36-25-4.2, 36-25-14	
Public records and retention	Records custodian, agency counsel and the Department of Archives and History.	§36-12-44	
Professional-services contracts	Agency procurement officer, Department of Finance and the Contract Review Committee.	§29-2-41	
Open meetings notice	Board counsel and the Secretary of State's meeting notice system.	§36-25A-3	
Rulemaking	Agency counsel, the agency secretary and the Legislative Services Agency.	§§41-22-5, 41-22-6	
Cybersecurity and technology	Agency security lead and OIT, accounting for statutory exclusions.	OIT governance library	

Tool H | Three Decision Scenarios

DECISION TOOL | Scenario 1

“The Governor wants me to replace the division director tomorrow.”

Assumptions: the division director is an agency employee, not a board member.

Find out whether the position is classified, exempt, unclassified or specially governed, who the appointing authority is, who may remove the incumbent and which process applies. A commissioner’s at-pleasure service does not make every subordinate at pleasure. Get a written path from counsel and personnel before issuing an order.

See §36-26-10, §36-13-7 and Chapters 1 and 9.

DECISION TOOL | Scenario 2

“The agency needs an emergency contract by Friday.”

Assumptions: the contract is for professional services paid from appropriated funds.

Ask what changed, when the need became known, which procurement method the law permits, who has signature authority and where the money comes from. Ask whether the contract needs review by the Contract Review Committee before it is made. A tight calendar is not itself an emergency finding.

See §29-2-41 and Chapter 10.

DECISION TOOL | Scenario 3

“A reporter wants messages on my personal phone.”

Assumptions: the messages concern agency business.

Preserve the material. Send the request to the custodian and counsel the day it arrives. Decide the track, acknowledge within 10 business days, apply exemptions and the redaction rule with counsel, and respond or extend in writing. Do not delete or move messages to avoid review.

See §36-12-44, Act 2026-592 and Chapter 13.

Tool I | Exit and Successor Handoff

Area	Hand over
Authority	Resignation or end-of-term instrument, interim signing authority, open board decisions, current delegations.
Continuity	Upcoming hearings, litigation, audits, grants, contracts, operational incidents, staffing risks, security access.
Records	Custody and retention, litigation holds, official devices and accounts, decision logs, pending requests, and the plan for later access to records for a claim.
Personal	Payroll, leave, insurance, retirement, post-employment restrictions analysis.
Liability	Your copy of the Liability Confirmation Checklist, notices you sent, and Risk Management's written answer on later claims.
Successor packet	What must happen in 7, 30 and 90 days; where the evidence lives; who owns the next decision.

SUCCESSOR RECEIPT CERTIFICATION

Items received (list or attach)	**Records transferred to (custodian)**
Successor signature	**Date**
Departing official signature	**Date**

Tool J | Crisis Card

Fill the top section in before you need it. Keep one copy off the network. Priorities differ by incident, so this card sets an order of concern for each type and not a clock.

BEFORE AN INCIDENT

Incident lead (primary)	**Incident lead (backup)**
Spokesperson	**Agency counsel**
Security lead / OIT contact	**Emergency management contact**
Governor's Office contact	**Records custodian**
Risk Management contact	**Attorney General contact**

PRIORITIES BY INCIDENT TYPE

Incident	First concerns, in this order
Cybersecurity or system outage	Protect people and data. Authorize a shutdown only through the named role. Notify OIT and counsel. Preserve logs. Then communicate.
Injury, facility or public safety	Protect people. Contact emergency management and law enforcement through the named role. Notify counsel. Preserve the scene and records. Report to Risk Management in writing as soon as practicable.
Lawsuit, demand letter or subpoena	Send the papers to the department director at once. Notify counsel, Risk Management and the Attorney General. Issue a litigation hold. Do not respond or promise anything.
Public allegation or media inquiry	Confirm what is verified. Name one spokesperson. Preserve records. Approve a plain statement and the time of the next update.
Records or privacy breach	Contain the exposure. Notify counsel and the records custodian. Preserve. Check whether a notification duty applies.

Next update time	**Who approved the public statement**

Tool K | Agency Profile and Appointment Inventory

A structure for a one-page profile and an inventory of the appointed seats your agency touches. The rows below hold only seats we verified on November 10, 2026. Every other row is blank on purpose. Do not fill a row without citing the statute.

Agency or board name	**Creating statute**
Head of agency and how selected	**Governing board, if any**
Appropriation lines and funds	**Authorized positions**
Key statutory deadlines	**Open litigation or consent orders**

Seat	Appoints	Term	Senate consent
Superintendent of Banks	Governor	Ends first day of Feb after the appointing Governor's term	Yes; interim until Senate acts
State Personnel Director	State Personnel Board	Not stated	Not stated
Environmental Management Commission (7)	Governor	Six years; 18-year maximum	Yes; interim until Senate refuses
Director, ADEM	The Environmental Management Commission	Not read	Not read
Board of Pardons and Paroles (3)	Governor from a list of five	Six years from Mar 1	Yes; deemed confirmed if the Senate does not vote
Public Service Commission (7)	Voters for most seats; Governor for four initial seats from lists	4-year and 6-year terms by seat	Not stated
Secretary of Energy	Governor, at the Governor's pleasure	Pleasure of the Governor from Jan 19, 2027	None stated in the act

Tool L | Public Records Request Log

Date in	Requester and request	Track	Ack. date	Notice and fees	Due or extended to	Redactions applied	Closed

Track: standard (acknowledge in 10 business days, respond in 15 after acknowledging) or time-intensive (notify within 15 business days after acknowledging, respond in 45 after the requester elects to proceed). Extensions must be written.

Tool M | Board Meeting Checklist

Before the meeting	Done
Which body is acting, and who is a member? Quorum confirmed.	
Notice posted at least seven calendar days ahead for a regular meeting (Secretary of State for statewide bodies). A shorter branch (24 hours, or one hour in an emergency) is used only if counsel has said it applies.	
Agenda matches the notice. Materials are ready for public inspection.	
Recusals identified. Counsel has reviewed any closed-session purpose.	
Votes, motions and attendance recorded. Minutes drafted within the board's own deadline.	
Records preserved. Any threatened claim reported to Risk Management.	

Tool N | Rulemaking Tracker

Rule	Authority	Notice published	Notice period ends	Filed with agency secretary	Filed with LSA (limit)	Effective date	Emergency rule? End date

Notice is at least 35 days. The notice period ends 35 to 90 days after the notice date. File with LSA within 15 days of the agency secretary filing and within 90 days after the notice period ends. Generally effective 45 days after the filing notice. An emergency rule lasts at most 120 days and cannot be renewed.

Tool O | Contract Routing Sheet

Vendor or grantee	**Contract type (goods, services, public works, grant)**
Appropriation and fund	**Method (bid, proposal, sole source, emergency) and basis**
Delegation or exemption relied on	**Contract Review Committee submission date, if required**
Legal review (name, date)	**Conflict screening (name, date)**
Signing authority	**Renewal date**
Records redaction owner (Act 2026-592)	**Evidence for audit**

Tool P | Governor's Office Chart (fill in)

Fill this in during your first week from what the Governor's Office tells you in writing. Do not copy a chart from an earlier administration. Title and reporting line change with a new Governor.

Role or function	Name	Reports to	Decides or routes for you	Contact and how they prefer to be reached
Governor				
Chief of staff or equivalent				
Legal advisor				
Appointments and boards				
Legislative affairs				
Budget liaison (Executive Budget Office)				
Communications and press				
Policy staff for your area				
Cabinet liaison				
Scheduling and correspondence				
Other				

Titles in the Governor's Office may differ from this list. Ala. Code §36-13-2 lists staff the Governor may employ. Whether a person holds a statutory title or a working title is a question to ask, not to assume.

Directory of Alabama Executive Agencies

Use this directory to find who does what and where the official page is. It is a starting map, not a complete roster. Each role is a plain-language summary; the statute that creates the agency controls.

OFFICIAL PRACTICE | Cabinet list

The 24 cabinet entries below follow the cabinet list on the Governor's website as of November 11, 2026, with each department's listed website. Titles are shown, not names, because leadership will change with the January 2027 transition. Check the Governor's page for the current list.

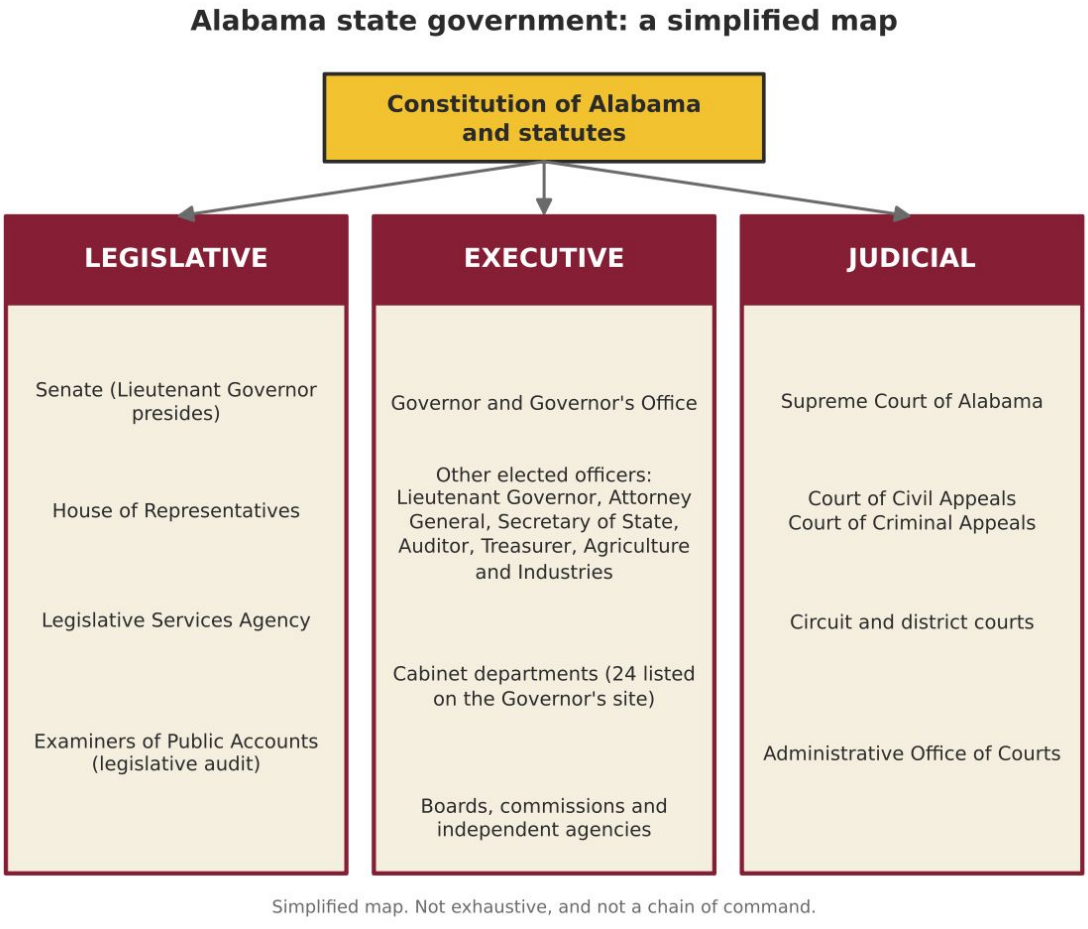


Figure 9. Alabama state government, simplified map

Statewide elected officers

Office	Plain-language role	Official website
Governor	Chief executive. Appoints many board members and cabinet heads where law assigns that power.	governor.alabama.gov
Lieutenant Governor	President of the Senate. Casts a vote only to break a tie. Succeeds the Governor if the office is vacant.	ltgov.alabama.gov
Attorney General	The State's chief legal officer. See Chapter 6 on how this differs from agency counsel.	alabamaag.gov
Secretary of State	Elections, meeting notices for statewide bodies, official acts and records.	sos.alabama.gov
State Auditor	Elected officer with duties set by statute. Confirm the current duties before relying on one.	auditor.alabama.gov
State Treasurer	Elected officer with duties set by statute. Confirm the current duties before relying on one.	treasury.alabama.gov
Agriculture and Industries	Serves farmers and consumers and inspects to keep the food supply safe.	agi.alabama.gov

Governor's cabinet departments

Department	Head's title	Plain-language role	Official website
Bureau of Pardons and Paroles	Director	Runs operations in support of the Board of Pardons and Paroles.	paroles.alabama.gov
Department of Veterans Affairs	Commissioner	Serves Alabama veterans and their families.	va.alabama.gov
Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA)	Secretary of Law Enforcement	State law enforcement and public safety agency.	alea.gov
Medicaid Agency	Commissioner	Administers the state Medicaid program.	medicaid.alabama.gov
Military Department and National Guard	Adjutant General	Leads the Alabama National Guard.	al.ng.mil
Office of Civic Engagement	Director	Advises the Governor on policy issues affecting women and minorities.	aoce.alabama.gov
Alcoholic Beverage Control Board	Administrator	Oversees distribution, licensing and enforcement of alcoholic beverage law.	alabcboard.gov
Banking Department	Superintendent	Supervises state-chartered banks. Superintendent is appointed under §5-2A-3 (Chapter 1).	banking.alabama.gov
Department of Commerce	Secretary	Economic development.	madeinalabama.com
Conservation and Natural Resources	Commissioner	State parks, wildlife, fisheries and public lands.	outdooralabama.com
Department of Corrections	Commissioner	Runs state adult prisons, work release and community work centers.	doc.state.al.us
Early Childhood Education	Secretary	State early childhood programs.	children.alabama.gov
Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA)	Director	Administers grant and community and economic development programs.	adeca.alabama.gov
Department of Finance	Director of Finance	Central finance, budget support and procurement (Chapters 7 and 10).	finance.alabama.gov
Department of Human Resources	Commissioner	Child welfare, adult protection and family assistance programs.	dhr.alabama.gov
Department of Insurance	Commissioner	Regulates the insurance industry.	aldoi.gov
Department of Mental Health	Commissioner	Mental health and developmental disability services.	mh.alabama.gov
Department of Revenue	Commissioner	Administers and collects state taxes.	revenue.alabama.gov

Department	Head's title	Plain-language role	Official website
Department of Senior Services	Commissioner	Programs for older Alabamians.	alabamaageline.gov
Department of Tourism and Travel	Director	Promotes tourism.	alabama.travel
Department of Transportation	Director	Highways, roads and bridges.	dot.state.al.us
Department of Workforce	See Governor's page	Workforce and employment programs.	workforce.alabama.gov
Emergency Management Agency	Director	Coordinates state emergency management.	ema.alabama.gov
Office of Information Technology	Secretary	Statewide technology governance.	oit.alabama.gov

CONFIRM

Role descriptions are summaries, not statutory text. Treat every row as a pointer to the agency's own page. The Governor's site names no separate website for the Department of Workforce.

Other agencies appointees meet often

Agency	Plain-language role	Official website
State Personnel Department	Merit System, classification and state hiring. Its Board and director have separate powers (Chapter 5).	personnel.alabama.gov
Environmental Management (ADEM)	Regulates pollution to water, land and air and enforces major federal environmental laws.	adem.alabama.gov
Public Health	Disease prevention and public health services.	adph.org
State Department of Education	Oversees K-12 public education.	alabamaachieves.org
Public Service Commission	Oversees utility companies. Reorganized by Act 2026-345.	psc.alabama.gov
Examiners of Public Accounts	The State's legislative audit agency for state and county offices and public institutions.	examiners.alabama.gov
Ethics Commission	Disclosure, training, gifts and post-employment rules.	ethics.alabama.gov
Retirement Systems of Alabama	Retirement membership and service credit.	rsa-al.gov
State Employees' Insurance Board	Health insurance for state employees.	alseib.org
Archives and History	State records retention.	archives.alabama.gov

The State's Inform Alabama directory lists 156 agencies, boards and commissions, including the professional licensing boards, and links a detail page for each. The Legislature publishes the Alabama Government Manual, which describes the agencies in more depth. Use both before you assume an agency does not exist.

> **FIELD ADVICE | Governor's Office chart**
> Ask the Governor's Office for the current organization chart of the Office itself. Tool P gives you a blank chart to fill in during your first week. A chart from an earlier administration will not show who holds power now.

Where to Look

When the stakes are real, go to the office that keeps the record.

Office	Go there for	Address
Alabama Legislature (ALISON)	Code of Alabama, Constitution, enacted law, legislative process	alison.legislature.state.al.us
Executive Budget Office	Annual instructions and the budget process	budget.alabama.gov
State Personnel Department	Classification, hiring, Merit System	personnel.alabama.gov
State Employees' Insurance Board	Rates and eligibility	alseib.org
Retirement Systems of Alabama	Retirement membership and service credit	rsa-al.gov
Alabama Ethics Commission	Disclosure, training, gifts, post-employment	ethics.alabama.gov
Alabama Department of Archives and History	State records retention	archives.alabama.gov
Office of Information Technology	Statewide technology governance	oit.alabama.gov
Alabama Department of Finance	Procurement and central finance	finance.alabama.gov
Risk Management Division	General Liability Trust Fund and Guidelines	riskmgt.alabama.gov
Secretary of State	Meeting notices, acts, election calendar	sos.alabama.gov