

NOTE: Interesting to see some of the Great Give-Awayers now defending their taking of tax dollars as contrasted to avoiding the public before their back-room strategy meeting in Montgomery. Deliberately omitted from THEIR plan was OUR vote.

The regular font weight below is the news story as it ran in The Tuskegee News on June 8, 2017; my comments for your understanding and clarification are **bold text**.

The Tuskegee News June 8, 2017

Gov. Ivey signs bill increasing compensation for county officials

By Jacquelyn Carlisle, Community News Editor

The Macon County Commission approved a 2016-17 fiscal budget that a pay increase for its employees and an increase in Blue Cross Blue Shield premiums, which is a benefit employees receive for working with the county.

The additional premium cost was not passed on to the employees, but is an increase to the county's budget.

In addition, the budget includes a 3 percent cost-of-living increase for all employees, but not the commissioners.

All of those increases will come from the county's general fund, which is approximately \$5.1 million and has to cover all other expenses of the county. **(The 2014 State Public Examiner's audit directed the county to refund the Capital Improvement Fund \$1,250,000 after the county raided the restricted Capital Improvement Fund and transferred the money to the General Fund so the county could remain solvent. Regarding this audit finding, Chairman Maxwell justified the unlawful transfer on March 1, 2017 with "Due to the closing of Victory Land, the Macon County Commission has been financially strapped." The audit shows there exist four county funds with a shared "Deficit Fund Balance" of \$1,481,966.4, roughly one and a half million dollars!)** The overall budget will now have to reflect an increase the county commissioners and three other elected officials will be receiving **(collectively, \$38,400 per year)**. That increase was not in the original approved budget **(that's okay, money shuffling is great until being caught)**.

The budget that the county approved in Oct 2016 did not reflect a pay increase for the county commissioners. The commissioners asked the state legislators **(there was no solicited citizen input or proactive dialog with their constituents before colluding with our legislators)** to introduce and get a bill passed for the commissioners and three other elected officials to receive an annual expense allowance in the amount of \$4,800. **(A dollar is a dollar taken from the general fund, despite of what it is called today or tomorrow. BTW, the law reads "salary ... which may be treated as compensation.")**

The amount will be payable in equal month installments. **(Based on “only \$12/day,” the commission members spoke to play down the importance of taking our money. I question how many of our neighbors in genuine need would also want an additional \$12 per day x 365 days. However most, I suspect, would reject it from an acquaintance had withdrawn it from some guy’s banking account across town.)**

The other officials included in that bill are the Judge of Probate **(now earns about \$108,000/year)**, Macon County Revenue Commissioner **(now earns about \$83,000 with two years in office)** and the Sheriff of Macon County **(now earning only \$2K more than the Chair. Along with many other citizens, he is worthy of a significant increase for placing his life on the front line for each of the 19,000 citizens and visitors 24x7.)**

The bill which as introduced in the House by Rep. Pebblin Warren and in the Senate by Bill Beasley, was passed during the regular session of the Alabama Legislature. The bill will go into effect the first day of the third month following the approval of Gov. Ivey, who [sic] means it will not go into effect until Aug. 1, 2017. Gov. Ivey signed the bill into law on Friday, May 26, according to District 4 Commissioner.

“I am pleased the bill passed,” said Berry. “I am going out at 7 a.m. almost every morning checking in my district and seeing what I can help do. I am putting this on my personal vehicle and was not getting any compensation for it **(other than the previous \$4,800 raise about 2000 and the county fuel withdrawals)**. My wife teased me by saying, ‘it is costing you more in gas than the salary you are getting.’” **(Then be honorable and resign, rather than taking, not asking, more money from the residents and business for personal benefit.)**

Macon County Commissioner Chairman Louis Maxwell will also get the allowance, but was more in favor of the commissioners getting it other than him. **(Then donate your \$4,800/year, Chairman Maxwell, to one of the many county charities.)**

“I supported the bill for the commissioners,” Maxwell. “And I hope to have another bill introduced and passed for Macon County Circuit Clerk David Love, who was not included in this bill.” **(Bold as they come with using public money. If rumors are correct you, Maxwell, are considering a campaign for Circuit Clerk and would directly once again personally benefit by your actions. Our legislative delegation voted themselves a 62% salary increase in 2007. The Macon County Commission in 2015 gave away the ultimate gold watch to retired “Ed” Corbitt. That deal is costing us \$4,806.78/month AND \$571.06/month for his healthcare, identical to other county elected county public servants, until he reaches “full retirement age, as defined by the Social Security Administration,” shows a county record. In truth we are presently paying health coverage, at the identical rate, for two Revenue Commissioners! Full circle. The legislative “tag-team” delegation—while representing only 8 of 19,000 citizens—worked with the county Commissioners in this Great Give-Away, removed from public scrutiny. And the course of political cronyism goes round and round. Berry admitted during the legislative public hearing the commissioners were previously given a \$400/month pay increase. My study draws that this pay raise occurred sometime around 2001, just before he was removed from**

office. However, I suspect he is presently receiving that \$4,800/year and come August will be taking the Great Give-Away money as well.)

Maxwell, who has not received a copy of the signed bill as of Tuesday is provided a vehicle for travel and received more in salary than the **(part-time) commissioners (who will each take \$28,000/year, contrasted to many county residents working two jobs for survival below the county's \$17,000/year per capita income level).**

"The commissioners do not get travel compensation, (Not altogether accurate, but it fits their narrative. The chair, commissioners, and the other Great Give-Awayers are reimbursed for mileage, accommodations, and food to THEIR association conventions and training, not on a per diem basis, I might include. I have tape recording of the chair proclaiming he would travel more if the county had the money! County monthly fuel statements also show withdrawals by four of the five of the county commission. Many official county documents, not found outside the court house or destroyed in the recent court house fire, can be viewed and downloaded from frankdillman.com.) nor do they have vehicles provided for them," Maxwell continued. "We have to pay for our own cell phones and we have stopped attending conferences and other events to off-set some of the expenses to the county. (I repeat myself as I have addressed the commission in the past to this subject numerous times. Send one person per conference to report back to the commission AND citizens equally to its highlights and usefulness OR use one of the nine recently purchased Verizon tablets to participate on-line. As far as "our own cell phones," again not totally accurate. After years of Maxwell's monthly phone bill ranging in hundreds of dollars for his private and county use of county equipment and behaving as it was a public entitlement to have the county pay the bill, the policy changed on June 8, 2015. The commission members must now pay the county a monthly fee for the privilege of conducting personal business on a government phone at a significant government discount.)

We have not attended a National County Conference in a while. Some of the commissioners have never attended one, which is not good **(see my preceding remarks about sending ONE to conventions).**

"When the county has district meetings, the commissioners provide refreshments at these meeting (one meeting per year per district or four per an entire term of office), which is paid for out of their own pockets." (Once again, fits their narrative. Yes, the commissioners contribute and not always entirely from their "own pockets." My wife and I contributed several times from our "own pockets" making homemade baked goods and drinks. Fire department and other citizens have also contributed to the refreshments of ONE of the four district meetings per year. The chair on WSFA stated the commissioners use their personal money for softball uniforms as well. No local sponsorship? I cannot refute this assertion but I will question what becomes of the monies from rentals of district recreation centers and baseball fields for tournaments? I have voluntarily given the county \$200 to rent prisoners for litter detail and \$25 to three Employees of the Year recipients. Citizen participation being minimized is all about self-serving greed.)

Macon County Revenue Commissioner Iverson Gandy is also very appreciative of the bill.

"I am glad, because it will help me with travel expenses and when I am collecting personal property taxes," said Gandy. "I do not receive mileage compensation and have to drive my personal vehicle. We do not have a compliance officer to collect taxes for the Revenue Office and I go out and assist the Appraisal Officer in collecting personal and business property taxes **(I admire the stewardship of my retirement-based tax dollars by sharing the vehicle)**. So the allowance will help me a great deal." **(Gandy is a smart and likeable guy, he is! I am certain he and the other Great Give-Awakes knew the position's compensation before offering themselves to public service and campaigning hard for the office.)**

The county will be getting some additional revenue from the Community Correction Program which will be able to help pay for the increase for all the employees and the new expense allowance. **(Employees, yes. Otherwise the county commissioners should have decided on any of the many areas of the county in desperate need of \$38,400 per year instead of giving themselves a wage hike. Similar to the Great Give-Away, why has the commission not gone before the people to account for the need of placing Macon County citizens and visitors at risk by accepting "60 to 80" state prisoners in a half-way house arrangement for the "additional revenue..[for] the new expense allowance." Gotta love that \$58K start up money burning a hole already; has the check arrived? Commissioner Robinson publicly asked if they were "hardened criminals?" Chairman's reply was they are "prisoners" who will go back to prison for an infraction of the law or agreement as compared to parolees who would go before a judge. Gandy stated his departmental employees do not feel safe with the Community Corrections Program office in their proximity. When publically asked for a copy of the plan, the response was "you can read it when the contract is signed." An excellent illustration of why I have stated for years our county government has an impregnable cap deliberately and selectively employed to keep us ill-informed of our county business and our safety. How can the commissioners decide to bring in prisoners for profit without even presenting the plan in a public forum allowing citizen input on the matter, specifically when this is a public safety concern? This behavior from our commission shows a lack of respect and neglect in safety for the inhabitants of Macon County.)**