



The official monthly publication of the Alabama Department of Public Safety

THE BLUE LIGHT



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Assistant Director

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ABI Division

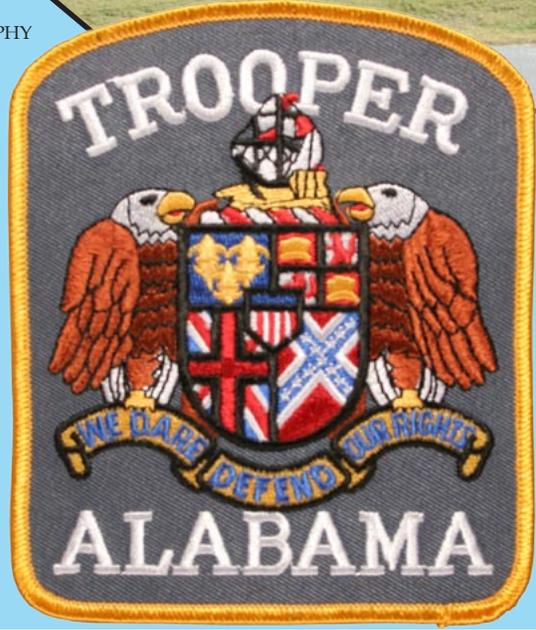
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MAJOR HERMAN WRIGHT
Protective Services Division

MAJOR JERRY CONNER
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The Colonel's Corner

Col. J. Christopher Murphy, Director



Well, Happy New Year and welcome to a new decade. As the Alabama Department of Public Safety ended 2009, we ended in our prime and on top of our game. On Dec. 27, 2009, both the Birmingham News and the Montgomery Advertiser had front-page articles about DPS — positive articles! Dec. 30, 2009, Gov. Bob Riley called a news conference in front of the Montgomery Highway Patrol Troop G headquarters to sing the praises of the Alabama Department of Transportation, the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs, and DPS in the tremendous drop in traffic fatalities.

In three years DPS has seen the fatality rate drop by an outstanding 35 percent. In 2009, we saw fatalities decrease by more than 100, following a drop of 133 in 2008, and a drop of 62 in 2007. In 2009, troopers responded to 700 fewer injuries and 500 fewer crashes, and increased

the number of DUI arrests by more than 800. And as Maj. Roscoe Howell, chief of Highway Patrol, reminds me, we had more than 90 deathless days in 2009 — days where troopers didn't have that terribly difficult job of notifying a family that a loved one has been lost to a traffic crash on an Alabama highway. In 2009, we also seized 23,434 more marijuana plants, 265 more pounds of cocaine, 46 more pounds of meth, and three more pounds of heroin compared to 2008. In March of 2009, ABI was tasked to work the worst shooting incident in Alabama history, creating a 20-mile crime scene over two counties and taking the life of 10 innocent victims and wounding six others. Tpr. Mike Gillis demonstrated the best of DPS while pursuing the suspect and took rounds to his patrol vehicle. As horrific as this nationally publicized incident was, ABI performed with excellence, as did PIO and those working in the Director's Crisis Center at Headquarters. From the Driver License Division, which continues to perform at an excellence level in spite of being 18 DL examiners short, to the Aviation Unit, IT, Accounting, Protective Services — both Capitol Police and protective details, which quietly represent the finest DPS has to offer — and throughout the department, DPS is at her prime and on top of her game.

2010 will be a challenging year, make no mistake. The budget is very dire. I do not envy the governor, acting finance director, or the legislature, as they will be forced to make very difficult choices for Alabama. I do encourage the legislature to allow furloughs in order that agencies will have another "tool in their tool chest" to avoid layoffs. At least furloughs allow an employee to keep health insurance, retirement, seniority, and other benefits, and only take a minimal reduction until we as a nation and as a state work past this deep recession.

With this economy, we must be extremely frugal in all that we do. We are always charged with being good stew-

The Colonel's Corner (CONTINUED)

ards of the citizens' money, but this will be especially challenging during 2010 and into 2011. Lt. Col. Bingham has been tasked to scrutinize all expenditures very carefully, and he does an outstanding job in all aspects of operations for DPS. We have exceptional division chiefs and assistant division chiefs, including our newest, Maj. Marc McHenry, and his new assistant division chief, Capt. Steve Dixon. They will lead their divisions with vision, creativity, and with a strong business sense. I am confident we will not merely survive, but we will excel in every aspect of the mission for which we are called to serve this great state.

In 2010, we will join the Department of Corrections and Wallace Community College-Selma and open our brand new, beautiful training academy. I am very excited and cannot wait until August. I am excited about the work Lt. Deana Pregno, Lt. Kevin Wright, Ron Blount, Seay, Seay, and Litchfield and so many others have done to make this dream a reality. However, I am also excited about the product we will be putting into this new facility. Capt. Randy Byrd and his staff have a first-rate program and are developing "centers of excellence" in areas like leadership development, active shooter, and digital evidence courses coming in 2010. I believe everyone will be very proud of the new facility and the programs that we will run there. The governor and legislature will feel the money will be well spent!

Gov. Bob Riley was quoted in the Birmingham News by Ginny MacDonald, who said of the governor, "He gets the sense that troopers understand how important their role has been in the dramatic decrease in highway fatalities." I could not agree more. Troopers do understand, and they are committed to what they do, not as a job, but as a calling; and that commitment shows every day. I would add that the same understanding lies within every PCO, DL examiner, IT specialist, ASA, every mechanic, and every custodial worker. Every employee of this department has that understanding, and it shows in the quality and quantity of work they do throughout this department. I see it, and it makes me very proud that the governor of this state, the legislators, and the citizens see it as well.

It is an extreme honor to be the director of the Alabama Department of Public Safety. I want to thank the 1,431 employees of this department who have caught the vision, who are working smarter, who are performing to the level of excellence that Alabama citizens deserve. Each of you helps make this department great, and you are not only improving the quality of life for our citizens, but you also are contributing to saving the lives of citizens.





Alabama Distracted Driving Summit Addresses Driver Inattention Dangers

Transportation leaders, elected officials, safety advocates, law enforcement representatives and private sector representatives, as well as transportation and public health scientists gathered in Birmingham on Dec. 3 for the Alabama Distracted Driving Summit.

The state of Alabama is the first state to acknowledge and host a summit addressing and combating the dangers of distracted driving. The state summit was directly inspired by the National Distracted Driving Summit, convened by U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood on Sept. 30 – Oct. 1, in

Washington, D.C. It was during the national summit that LaHood acknowledged that the U.S. is facing a national epidemic when dealing with distracted driving and driver inattention.

LaHood's warning inspired state legislators and educational professionals to model a state summit entirely from the national summit, and authoritative speakers convened in Birmingham to make presentations and participate in active panel discussions describing the impact of distracted driving, specifically in Alabama. Col. J. Christopher Murphy was called upon to be a panelist during the summit.



“In Alabama, our research identifies distracted driving among the top five driving behaviors that contribute to crashes and crash severity,” said Murphy. “We have been specifically targeting the bad driving behaviors of speeding, failure to yield right of way, following too closely, DUI, and driver inattention or driver distraction for three years now, and have seen a fatality reduction of more than 35 percent since 2006 as a result.

Murphy added, “Do we have specific data

that portrays the breadth and scope of distracted driving? No. Do we have a law that specifically prohibits texting while driving? No. But armed with existing law and with the understanding that safely operating a motor vehicle is a full-time job, we are working to curtail the violations of law that result from driver distraction. Our goal is to do so before that distraction leads to a serious or fatal crash.”

The National Safety Council points out that driver inattention is a leading cause of traffic crashes, responsible for about 80 percent of all collisions. The purpose of the Alabama Distracted Driving Summit is to make the public aware of the dangers of driver inattention, and to provide a forum for the exchange information and ideas aimed to prevent the growing number of crashes resulting from distracted driving.

“Distracted driving affects drivers at all ages, and, with the rapid proliferation of mobile technologies and the evolution of technology, distracted driving has assumed a pre-eminent role among threats to safety, Murphy said. “While we don’t have data that permits us to equate the involvement of distracted driving to that of DUI, all indications are that the level of impairment is similar.”



DISTRACTED DRIVING FAST FACTS

- ▶ Distracted driving is dangerous. Distraction from cell phone use while driving (hand held or hands free) delays a driver’s reactions as much as having a blood alcohol concentration at the legal limit of .08 percent. (*University of Utah*)
- ▶ Driving while using a cell phone reduces the amount of brain activity associated with driving by 37 percent. (*Carnegie Mellon*)
- ▶ 80 percent of crashes are related to driver inattention. There are certain activities that may be more dangerous than talking on a cell phone. However, cell phone use occurs more frequently and for longer durations than other, riskier behaviors. Thus, the #1 source of driver inattention is cell phones. (*Virginia Tech 100-car study for NHTSA*)
- ▶ Drivers that use handheld devices are four times as likely to get into crashes serious enough to injure themselves. (*Insurance Institute for Highway Safety*)



Riley Trumpets Success of DPS at New Year's Press Conference

Riley, holding a chart showing the dramatic drop in trooper-worked fatalities, discusses the importance of safe driving for the new year.

In a press conference at the Montgomery Post Dec. 30, Gov. Bob Riley celebrated the news that 2009 was the safest year on Alabama's highways in 60 years. Joining Riley and singled out for their agencies' work to increase safety were Joe McInnes, director of the Alabama Department of Transportation, and Col. J. Christopher Murphy, director of Public Safety.



As of Dec. 30, 532 people lost their lives in crashes on Alabama's rural highways. The last time year-end statistics were this low was 1949, when 532 fatalities were worked by Alabama state troopers. The preliminary figure for 2009 is 100 fewer than in 2008, and represents a reduction of over 35 percent from 2006.

"When it comes to saving lives, Alabama is clearly moving in the right direction," Riley said. "What we are doing here today will change someone's future tomorrow."

At the press conference, Murphy promised that DPS would continue to work smarter into 2010.

"As we enter into our 75th year, I am proud to acknowledge that we remain committed to our original mission of safety," said Murphy. "We are using statistical information to work more efficiently, and we will continue to target driving behaviors that contribute to crashes, such as speeding, failure to yield right of way, following too closely, DUI, and driver inattention."

"Crashes are preventable," added Murphy. "An estimated 40 percent of all crashes are alcohol-related. Severe injuries and fatalities are also preventable, by simply buckling up. In 2008, 63 percent of all fatalities were people who failed to wear their seat belt."

"The statistical figures," Riley said, "are a stark reminder that not only can you make a difference, you can make a dramatic difference."

At the press conference, Tpr. John Reese said that additional troopers will be on patrol for the New Year's Day holiday travel period. Reese also advised that all motorists buckle up, slow down, do not drink and drive, and drive defensively.

State of the Department Meetings

Keep DPS Informed



With the department now just one year shy of its 75th anniversary, Col. J. Christopher Murphy's year-end "State of the Department" meetings took the proud tone of great accomplishments amidst troubling financial times.

The annual series of update meetings were instituted by both Murphy and Lt. Col. F.A. "Bubba" Bingham in 2007 as a means of not only keeping all employees informed about the goings-on at DPS, but also to provide an opportunity for employees to directly ask questions and receive feedback on any number of issues regarding the department.

Murphy's tour of the state in November, December and wrapping up in January ensures that all DPS employees — both at Headquarters and at each post — have the opportunity to listen to and engage the colonel directly.

"Our accomplishments are stellar, and I believe we have fully earned the public's trust by carrying out our mission of highway safety in the state of Alabama," said Murphy. "As of mid-December, we've had 103 fewer trooper-worked fatalities, 586 fewer crashes, and 852 fewer injuries in 2009 than in the previous year. In addition, we've had 95 deathless days in 2009, and fatalities on Alabama's roadways have decreased by an astounding 35 percent in just three years."

Beyond the chief mission of highway safety, Murphy had many other successes to discuss. The construction of the new academy is on schedule and slightly under budget. Details at big events, including Talladega, the

Footwash, the Faunsdale Bike Rally, and Mardi Gras, were all without incident. And when facing the crisis of the south Alabama shootings in March, DPS's response was immediate, and as a result, order was promptly restored and the resulting investigation was exceptional.

"Right now, we are doing things that people simply thought we couldn't do," Murphy said. "Not only are we doing these things, and doing them well, we are also doing them with less."

Murphy especially praised the work and efforts of DPS employees behind the scenes, whose contributions are critical to completing Public Safety's mission.

Murphy also stressed the tough economic situation DPS is facing. State revenues are reduced, and with a budget already stretched thin, and vacant positions being left unfilled, Murphy warns that the worst may not be over.

"Our mission leaves us few options in terms of money," said Murphy. "We can't just choose to not respond to a crash just because money is tight. Everything each employee does here supports the department's mission. Cutting back and trimming costs are now a necessity to help us provide courtesy, service, and protection."

"How much value can you place on a human life?" Murphy asked rhetorically. "Traffic safety just doesn't equate to dollars and cents. That is our priority."

Bears Brighten Children's Faces at Christmas

For more than 20 years, Department of Public Safety employees, together with the Alabama State Trooper Association, team up to bring cheer to children in hospitals during the holidays. Each year at Christmas, troopers give teddy bears to children who, due to illness or injury, cannot be home during Christmas.

Traditionally, the famous state trooper bear is given to children traumatized as a result of being in a crash. "The campaign is a very effective one," said Tpr. John Reese. "The trooper bear brings joy to the children receiving one and is also a subtle reminder of the importance of safety."

While the goal of the trooper bear campaign is to bring joy to each recipient, troopers also spread cheer and laughter to the doctors, nurses, and hospital staff while visiting. As Reese explained, "Each year, hospital staff constantly joke with us about not bringing them a bear, too. Every year, before we leave, I always hear, 'Hey wait! Where is our bear?'"



Charter and Retired Members Day 2009



Retired sworn and nonsworn employees, family and friends of the Department of Public Safety gathered at the Golden Corral in Montgomery Dec. 4 to celebrate the 74th anniversary of the founding of the Alabama Highway Patrol.

After promising Alabamians a statewide law enforcement agency during his successful campaign, Gov. Bibb Graves commissioned the Alabama Highway Patrol Dec. 5, 1935. Each year, the Charter and Retired Members Club celebrates the rich heritage of the department by congregating for a luncheon to renew friendships, reminisce, share stories and conduct club business.



Following the luncheon, several retirees also visited the late governor's grave at Greenwood Cemetery in Montgomery to pay tribute to the Alabama Highway Patrol's founder.



Career Fair, Daycare Reading Open Safety Discussions with Youth

The Department of Public Safety was among the many agencies participating in a recent career fair at Riverchase Middle School in Shelby County. Students eager to learn about career opportunities at the fair also learned the importance of safety and the dangers of impaired driving.

Troopers also reached out to preschool-age children by supporting an initiative at a local day care in Birmingham.

Tpr. Charles Dysart recently took time to read to local children at the Kids First Developmental Academy. After reading them a story, Dysart also taught the children about seat belt safety and the importance of obedience at a very young age.

The staff and parents at the academy were very receptive and supportive of DPS's involvement in the program, and they are looking forward to DPS being able to take part in mentoring roles in the near future.



Mobile Post Makes Christmas Donation

Sgt. Lawrence Goff and Cpl. Steve Smith delivered gifts and a \$100 donation to the Mobile-area Salvation Army Dec. 9. Salvation Army Maj. Tom Merritt accepted the gifts to be used in the organization's Angel Tree program. The monetary gift will be used to support other Christmas season initiatives.

The delivered gifts were all collected from DPS employees. Attendees of Mobile's Christmas party were all encouraged to provide a gift for a less-fortunate child in their community.

"As members of the Department of Public Safety, we enter the Christmas season knowing that our jobs are safe and our families provided for," Goff said. "We should be thankful for that, while at the same time being empathetic with those who are not so fortunate."



From left, Goff, Merritt, and Smith.

Charitable Giving by DPS Contributes to Successful 2009 State Combined Campaign

For years, DPS participation in the State Combined Campaign was low. In 2007, only 29 employees contributed. Even fewer gave in 2006.

All that changed last year, when nearly 200 employees gave over \$15,000 to the charity of their choice.

The reason for the lack of enthusiasm was attributed to lack of awareness, not only of the campaign, but also how the charities work diligently to impact the lives of others.

“Despite the troubling economy, we have good participation in the campaign at Headquarters,” said Lt. Tim Pullin. “Historically, DPS participation in the campaign has been anemic, but figures for the last two years have been much more encouraging.

To help encourage giving, Col. J. Christopher Murphy and Lt. Col. “Bubba” Bingham

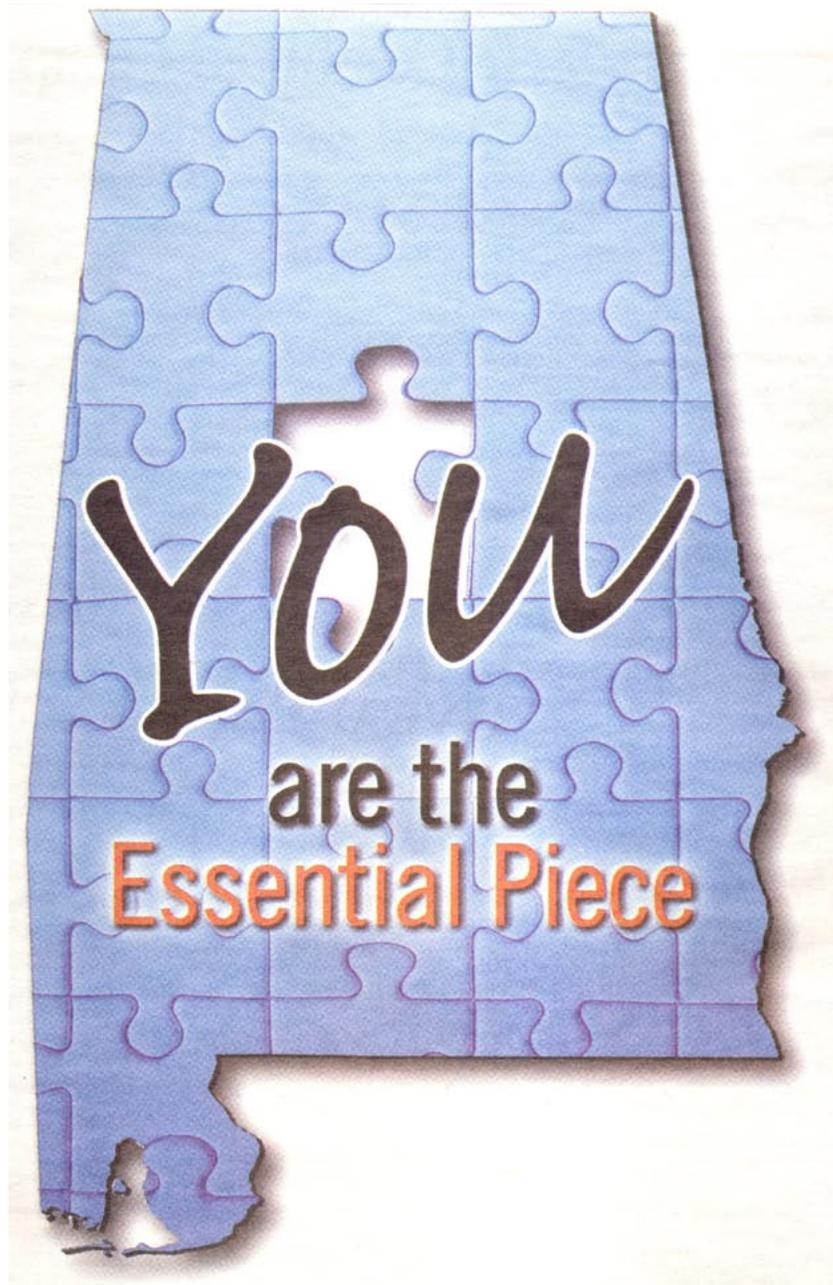
forfeited their parking space for one month to a randomly chosen Headquarters employee. Murphy’s space went to Alice Free, and Bingham’s space went to Costella German, both of the Financial Services Unit.

“It’s heartwarming to see people give, particularly during such troubling economic times,” said Pullin. “Often, when times get tough is when these organizations need the most support, so I encourage everyone to give what they can, and make the best of what we all have.”

The State Combined Campaign supports the work of nearly 600 approved charitable agencies and organizations. The campaign also ensures your money goes where you want it to go. No charity is allowed to participate with more than 30 percent of total revenues going towards administrative costs.

The campaign also breaks the state down geographically, so if you want your money to specifically help people in a certain corner of the state, you can do that.

“If every DPS employee contributed just \$2, we would exceed our goal,” said Pullin. “That’s only a few trips to the vending machine.”





Above: A 1957 Highway Patrol car in front of the original Kilby Prison Dairy Farm. The farm was once recognized as having the best Guernsey cattle herd in the state and provided milk for the state prison system.

Below: Gov. Bob Riley examines a restored 1972 AMC Javelin before the press conference Dec. 30. The Alabama Highway Patrol began using Javelins in 1971. They were the first pony cars to be used on patrol by any U.S. police organization. Note the special decal applied above the rear fender commemorating the department's 75th year.

Department of Public Safety

75 Heading Toward

1935 - 2010





People You Know!

New Employees

Danielle Humble	12.01.09	Clerical Aide	Medical Unit
Teresa Moore	11.16.09	DL Examiner I	DL/Huntsville

Reemployment

Bly Panter	12.01.09	Trooper	Jacksonville
Michael Wilson	12.01.09	Trooper	Jacksonville

Promotions

Julie Adair	11.16.09	Account Clerk	HP/Administrative Unit
Kim Card	11.16.09	Programmer Analyst	DL/Information Services
Christopher King	12.01.09	Corporal	HP/Selma Post
Marc McHenry	12.01.09	Major	ADM/Division Chief
Danny Reed	11.16.09	Building Custodian I	HP/Mobile Post
Lee Smith	12.01.09	PCO II	HP/Opelika Post
John Wall	12.01.09	Sergeant	ABI/Investigative Operations
Ira Whitehead	12.01.09	Sergeant	HP/MCSU
Jacqueline Williams	12.01.09	ASA III	ABI/Administrative Unit

Transfers

Jeremy Cantrell	12.01.09	Sergeant	DL/Decatur Examining
Christopher Faulk	11.16.09	Trooper	HP/Lowndes County
Billy Fulmer	11.16.09	Trooper	HP/Dallas County
Harvey Holifield	12.01.09	Sergeant	DL/Montgomery Examining
Darryl Moore	12.01.09	Sergeant	DL/Jacksonville Examining
Jessie Peoples	12.01.09	Sergeant	ADM/ACJTC
Tisha Tyrus	11.16.09	Accounting Technician	ADM/Financial Services
Kenneth Vines	11.16.09	Sergeant	PS/Dignitary Protection
James White	11.16.09	Sergeant	DL/Hearing/Fraud Unit

Retirement

Robert Watson	11.30.09	Sergeant	HP/Mobile County
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POST CHRISTMAS PARTIES 2009



Alabama Department of



Public Safety

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- Capt. Charles Ward, PS*
- Capt. Jack Clark, HP*
- Sgt. Ricky Agerton, ABI*
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WE'RE ON THE WEB!

DPS.ALABAMA.GOV

Questions? Comments? Concerns?

STAY IN TOUCH WITH *THE BLUE LIGHT*.
PLEASE E-MAIL ALL REQUESTS TO:

RYAN.GODFREY@DPS.ALABAMA.GOV

On Your Calendar

Friday, January 1

New Year's Day

Monday, January 18

Martin Luther King Day

Monday, February 15

President's Day

To Whom It May Concern:

I wanted to let your commanding officer know what a good job your Montgomery DL branch is doing. We had tried three times to get a new driver license for my 16 year-old in Prattville and Wetumpka, but weather conditions got us each time. After several tries, we finally wound up in Montgomery. Everyone there is so efficient and professional. I know you must be very proud of the job they do. I work in the court system for a judge, and I appreciate the professionalism and courtesy we experienced. Keep up the good work!

Mary King

To Whom It May Concern:

I was born and educated in Alabama, and have lived most of my life in this state. Having lived and traveled to many other states in the U.S. and noticing the various state troopers therein, I want to commend the persons responsible for choosing the color schemes for both our state troopers' uniforms and their patrol cars. I think our Alabama state troopers look very sharp and professional, and it has been that way for as long as I can remember. Keep up the good work.

Harold Wright