

# COVID-19 and the Complicated Grieving Process, p. 8

FREE

Friday

December 4, 2020

Vol. 7, No. 13

ValleyWeeklyllc.com



## Preston Brown: **Staying Committed**, p. 3

*"Jesse Johnson" p. 2*

*"I can resist anything  
except temptation."*

- Oscar Wilde



## City Aims to Hire F&R Team Members

The Huntsville Fire & Rescue department is seeking highly motivated and community-driven individuals to join its ranks.

With the announcement of a second round of hiring this year, the department responsible for stabilizing emergencies is looking to hire approximately 20 new team members. Primary responsibilities range from putting out fires to conducting rescue operations and keeping the public safe in numerous ways.

"The job of keeping our residents safe is sacred," said Huntsville Mayor Tommy Battle. "The women and men of Huntsville Fire & Rescue are elite, caring and brave individuals with a heart for service. As pillars of our



public safety infrastructure, these professionals are the backbone of our community and I look forward to welcoming those who are selected."

Huntsville Fire & Rescue Chief Howard McFarlen emphasized the importance of making sure this hiring class is representative of the broader Huntsville community.

"When our citizens look at their Fire & Rescue

department, it's important they see people that look like them," McFarlen said. "We're stronger when we have representation in our department from every background, every race and every socioeconomic status."

For additional info, contact the Fire & Rescue Office, 2110 Clinton Avenue, Huntsville, AL 35805, or call (256) 427-7401.

-HuntsvilleAL.gov

## HBG: Making Wreaths and Garlands

The Huntsville Botanical Garden will offer "Fresh Wreaths and Garlands: What to Grow and How to Make Them" on Saturday, December 12, 10 a.m.- 12 noon.

A fresh evergreen wreath

or garland in the home adds the perfect festive touch, and by knowing what to grow in your own home landscape, the decoration will be both festive and convenient.

The instructor, Rebecca

Turk, will cover key trees and shrubs to grow, as well as how to make an 18" wreath and a six-foot table garland using those plants.

For more information, visit [hsvbg.org](http://hsvbg.org).



**83rd!!!** Family, friends and well-wishers gathered in cars Sunday, November 29, at Louis Crews Stadium to line up for a "Birthday Driveby" for retired Alabama A&M University athletics director and former golf coach Gene Bright, who greeted about 100 cars from the entrance of the Knight Center. See PHOTOS on Page 3.

## World AIDS Day Virtual Concert

The Central North Alabama Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., is hosting a World AIDS Day Virtual Concert on December 5. Join on Zoom and Facebook.

All proceeds will benefit Thrive Alabama. Paypal donation link in bio or mail to CNAAL - IAI, P.O. Box 39, Madison, AL 35758.

The  
**Valley Weekly**  
**INSIDE THIS ISSUE!**

Champion Game Plan, Page 3

John Moore's "PowerShot", Page 4

Valley Deaths, Page 5

tim allston: Perspectives, Page 6

Washington in One Minute, Page 7

A Very Different Tax Season, Page 8

Born in December, Page 8

# Called 2 Preach

by Pastor/Founder Michael D. Rice  
Grace Gethsemane Mission Church

## “A Strange Route for a Strategic Reason”

Exodus 13:17-22

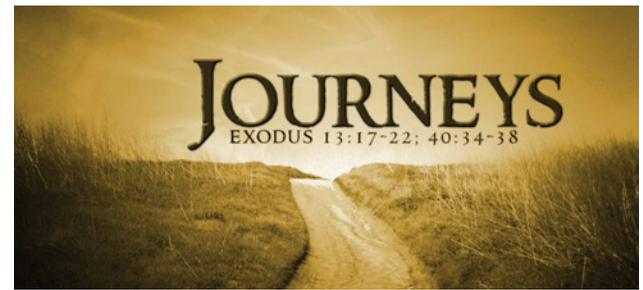
The providence and prudence of God when viewed from the pages of Scripture are marvelous truths to behold. Perhaps nowhere is that better clarified than in the story of Israel in their departure from Egypt and their journey to the Promised Land. As always with the providence of God, there is more to “the

story” than just being a story. No doubt, logistically and logically speaking the “shortest distance” would have been the prudent one to take. However, God instructed Moses to take a *strange route*, but it was for a *strategic reason*. When the entire story is read we see three things that God always knows and does for His people. First, He gave them *an accurate*



*path*. He knows the terrain and tempest of every track of territory because He is the Creator of heaven and earth. Secondly, God *affirmed His purpose* for

sending them that way. He knew about them what He knows about all His people, their level of maturity and readiness. “If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt.” Fresh out of bondage, they knew nothing about battles. That would come several years later with Joshua. The third thing that we see that God did was to give them



the *assurance of His presence*. A pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. The next time you find your-

self on a *strange route*, just remember, it's for a *strategic reason*.

### Spotlight on Our Elders ... Featuring

## Mr. Jesse Johnson, Jr.

Korean and Vietnam War veteran Jesse Johnson, Jr., of Tampa, Fla., devoted more than 41 years to a career built on enlisted, civilian and corporate experiences. He served the Army as an enlisted officer and served in both Korea and Vietnam for almost 11 years. From there, he served 30 years in the civil service arena as a specialist in equipment for the HAWK Missile System; to the Maintenance Engineering Directorate, USAMICOM; as a logistics and program management specialist; and as an international program management specialist.

Even for a few years following his retirement in 1995, he continued to serve as a consultant for international program management at Sigma Tech, Inc., of Hunts-



ville, Ala.

Johnson has been married to Mrs. Ella Mary Harris for over 60 years, and they are the parents of three children, one daughter in Hoover, Ala., and two sons--one in Huntsville and the other in Jacksonville, Fla. One of his grandsons was accepted into Harvard University.

They also have five beautiful grandchildren, three grandsons and two grand-

daughters.

His religious and community service is legion and encompasses contributions to the Alabama A&M University Alumni Association, Defense systems Management College Alumni Association, Pacesetters Lions Club, International Association of Lions Clubs, Blacks in Government, and many others.

A sociology and economics graduate of Alabama A&M University, Johnson enjoys golf, chess, home construction projects and gardening. He has awards and commendations too numerous to articulate.

Now into his 80s, Johnson works out twice a week and finds himself volunteering somewhere within the community frequently.

**DECEMBER 4 - TYRA BANKS** - Born in Los Angeles, California, Tyra Banks is best known as hostess/judge of the reality television show, “America’s Next Top Model,” since its 2003 debut. She also hosts her own talk show, “The Tyra Banks Show.”  
- [BlackinTime.info](http://BlackinTime.info)



## Albert's Flowers

Located Downtown in Medical District; Closest Florist to Huntsville Hospital  
Free Delivery to Huntsville Hospital and Local Funeral Homes

716 Madison Street - Huntsville, AL 35801

**FLOWERS, GIFTS,  
EXOTIC FLOWERS**

**Graduate of  
American Floral Art School**

256-533-1623

256-536-6911

[www.albertsflowers.com](http://www.albertsflowers.com)



*Come Discover  
the Magic on  
the Mountain!*

No matter what time of year you explore Burritt on the Mountain, there is something delightful and new to see. And no matter how young – or old – you are, there is something for you on the Mountain! If you've never visited, you're in for a treat. If it's been awhile, what are you waiting for? Come on up and let the Magic begin!

**NOW OPEN!**

3101 Burritt Drive • Huntsville, Alabama 35801 • 256.536.2882

[www.burrittonthemountain.com](http://www.burrittonthemountain.com)

OPEN: April-October: Tuesday - Saturday: 9 am - 5 pm & Sunday: noon - 5pm  
November-March: Tuesday - Saturday: 10am - 4pm & Sunday: noon - 4pm

# Retired AAMU AD, Golf Coach Celebrates 83rd Birthday

Sunday, November 29, 2020

Ernest L. Knight Reception Center - 2 p.m. (Photos by J. Saintjones)



## Champion Game Plan for Life

“STAYING COMMITTED”

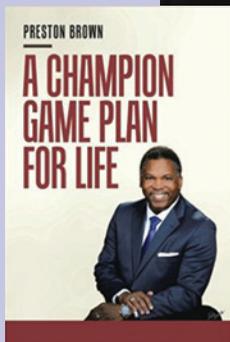
by Preston Brown

In Matthew 4:1 it says, “Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.” But Jesus overcame the devil’s temptations because He was committed to completing the task that God had called Him to do.

You see, His mind was set, and there were no options. Today, I believe that we need to be committed, as well, with no options as it pertains to our spiritual, emotional and social development--meaning no giving up, no backing down, no changing your mind, no wavering back and forth, no options. Too many times we give ourselves too many options that create

too many distractions that make us change our mind from what God has called us to do.

Jesus was committed. Now to commit means to bind or obligate oneself to a promise or a course of action that one intends to take. When you are committed, you are dedicated and loyal to a cause or activity or a job wholeheartedly. So when we enter into a relationship with someone, we need to be committed. When you get that job that you had been hoping



for, you need to be committed. When we decide to make changes in our lives to better ourselves, we need to be committed and our commitment needs to be influenced by

God. When your commitment is influenced by God, you will have a better chance at staying committed ... Stay encouraged, my brothers and sisters. Make sure you purchase a copy of my book, “A CHAMPION GAME PLAN FOR LIFE,” at amazon.com

“The most dangerous creation of any society is the man who has nothing to lose.” - James Baldwin



Dedicated To You.  
Delivering Results.

Personal Injury | Auto Accidents | Probate & Estate Administration  
Corporate Law | Real Estate Law | Divorce | Criminal Law

### Contact Us

Phone: 256-533-1667

Fax: 256-533-1696

info@martinsonandbeason.com

www.martinsonandbeason.com

facebook.com/martinsonandbeason



No representation is made that the quality of the legal services to be performed is greater than the quality of legal services performed by other lawyers.

# BRYANT BANK

Unbeatable Service. Legendary Results.™

BANKING & MORTGAGE SERVICES

Downtown Huntsville | 415-H Church Street, Suite 100 • Huntsville, AL 35801 • 256.533.1045  
Southeast Huntsville | 1804 Four Mile Post Rd SE • Huntsville, AL 35802 • 256.217.5170



www.bryantbank.com



## OU Celebrates Endowment of Scholarship

During the 30th anniversary of his radio broadcast on Oakwood University's Praise 90.1 FM WJOU, host and alumnus Kenny Anderson announced the endowment of the 212 Community Service Scholarship at OU.

"I am so honored to have been given this platform at Praise 90.1 FM WJOU. In 2015, we officially established the '212 Community Service Scholarship at Oakwood University' for a psychology student (sophomore, junior, senior) who is also investing in community service," said Anderson.



"The initial endowment of \$25,000 has grown to \$28,000 since then. I thank all of the donors, supporters, well wishers, station management and listeners who made this happen, and I will continue to grow this scholarship over the coming years so that students

can achieve their dreams," he concluded.

*Pictured, l-r: Dr. Martin Hodnett, Mrs. Cheri Wilson, and alumnus Kenny Anderson, commemorating the endowment of the 212 Community Service Scholarship.*

### PowerShot

"I believe it's time that women truly owned their superpowers and used their beauty and strength to change the world around them."

+Janelle Monae



www.blackcottoncompany.com

# REGISTER FOR SPRING

CLASSES BEGIN JANUARY 6

drakestate.edu

**DRAKE STATE**  
COMMUNITY & TECHNICAL COLLEGE

# MAYHEM IS EXPENSIVE. ALLSTATE IS NOT.



**JAMES F SMITH & ASSOCIATES**  
256-852-7310

415 CHURCH ST NW BUILDING B  
HUNTSVILLE  
jamesfsmith@allstate.com



**Allstate**

Subject to terms, conditions and availability. Allstate Property and Casualty Insurance Co. © 2013 Allstate Insurance Co.

168974

## HUNTSVILLE AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

### Public Meeting Notice

\*\*\*\*\*

The Citizens Advisory Committee of the Huntsville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization will meet **Monday, November 30, 2020** at 5:00 pm. The Metropolitan Planning Organization Board meets on Wednesday, **December 2, 2020** at 4:00 pm. ALL meetings will be held on the 1st floor of Huntsville City Hall located at 308 Fountain Circle. To read the plans up for review at this meeting, visit:

<http://www.huntsvillempo.org/plans-and-reports/>

For all other information on these meetings, visit:

<http://www.huntsvillempo.org/about/meetings-and-agendas/>



### Ivory W. Reedus, LUTCF

Agent

AL #A-058076

### New York Life Insurance Company

200 Clinton Avenue, Suite 600

Huntsville, AL 35801

Tel: 256-517-5922 Direct

Tel: 256-852-7328

Fax: 256-593-1842

ireedus@ft.newyorklife.com

New York Life "The Company You Keep"



**SERENITY**  
FUNERAL HOME

2505 University Dr. NW  
Huntsville, Alabama 35816  
(256) 539-9693

A New Generation Of Service

## The Valley Weekly

## Publisher

The Valley Weekly, LLC

## Editor-in-Chief

Dorothy W. Huston, Ph.D.

Editorial Consultant/  
Senior Editor

Jerome Saintjones, Ed.S.

## Editorial Assistants

Linda Burruss  
Phyllis Chunn  
William Huston, Sr.  
Gary T. Whitley, Jr.

## Advertising Associate

Phyllis Chunn

## - Contributing Editors -

tim allston  
Lamar A. Braxton, Jr.  
Minister Preston Brown  
Ron Hamm  
Pastor Michael D. Rice

## Website Administrator

Calvin Farier

## Mailing Address:

The Valley Weekly  
415A Church Street - Suite 100  
Huntsville, AL 35801  
(256) 651-9028  
www.valleyweeklyllc.com  
Copyright 2020

Items for consideration for publication in The Valley Weekly should be submitted at least TWO weeks in advance to above address or by e-mail to info@valleyweeklyllc.com. Items do not necessarily reflect the views of The Valley Weekly, LLC.

Submissions to TVW do not necessarily reflect the belief of the editorial staff and TVW is not responsible for the authenticity of submissions.

The Valley Weekly  
Ad Rates Single Issue

Back Cover	10x10-inches	\$1,000
Full Page	10x10 inches	\$800
3/4 Page	7.5x10 inches	\$600
Half Page	Horizontal	\$400
	5x10 inches	
Fourth Page	Vertical	\$400
	10x5 inches	
Eighth Page	5x5 inches	\$200
	2.5x5 inches	
Sixteenth Page	2.5x2.5	\$50
Classified	1 col.x1 inch	\$50/Flat Fee (4 col. in. minimum=\$24)
	6 Month/1 Yr.-10% & 20% Discount!	

# COVID-19 and Funerals: A Complicated Grieving Process

by BlackDoctor.org

With the numbers of people dying growing from coronavirus COVID-19, there are inevitably more family members grieving. But here's the issue: they can't grieve, well at least not like how they used to.

COVID-19 has forced families, funeral directors and loved ones to rethink how funerals are done.

Since nearly every state has issued a "shelter at home" mandate there has been a ban on gatherings greater than mainly 10 people, including funerals. And for many, it seems to be working and flattening the curve of the disease. But an issue happened in South Carolina.

Six South Carolina residents have died of coronavirus a few weeks after attending the same funeral, officials reported. The group—which includes a married couple—had all attended the same funeral in Kershaw County held in the first week of March, Sumter County coroner Robbie Baker said. The funeral occurred after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued March 16th guidance to funeral directors, urging them to live-stream services to comply with social-distancing restrictions.

According to the National Funeral Directors website, it states: "at this time, CDC guidance states, 'There is currently no known risk associated with being in the same room at a funeral or visitation service with the body



of someone who died of COVID-19.' However, the CDC also notes, 'People should consider not touching the body of someone who has died of COVID-19.'"

So how are people supposed to grieve their family and friends?

Although nothing can replace the hugging, embracing and direct human experience of an in-person service, virtual services are still real and can be fulfilling when you're trying to say goodbye to your loved ones. I know it's on a screen, but virtual services can incorporate most of the main elements you'd see in a traditional service.

And even though they may be virtual, experts say services still can maintain their serious and respectful tone while honoring the deceased.

Dutch Nie, a funeral director for Nie Family Funeral Homes in Ann Arbor, Michigan, said that in light of the coronavirus

pandemic, he has also introduced virtual funeral services, which he hadn't needed to offer before.

This all came after the news of Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer laid down his state's social distancing policies. The updated laws progressively stopped gatherings of 100 people, then 50, then it went to 10. Virtual services became a necessity, especially with the large number of deaths in his community.

And besides livestreaming ceremonies, if your loved one decided to be cremated, that's another story. It becomes a different process under social distancing guidelines. Nie said he and colleagues leave flowers, a lit candle, and a loved one's remains in the funeral home's vestibule.

The NFDA issued this note for funeral homes moving forward: "NFDA's recommendation for funeral gatherings is just that – a recommendation. If your state has issued mandates or guidance that is more stringent, you MUST follow those local limits – no exceptions. For example, your state may require that services be limited to 10 total people including family, clergy and funeral home staff. Or, you may be limited to 5, as is the case in Connecticut. Or, your state may have completely banned funerals, as is the case in New Jersey. Please follow the mandates in your state and adhere to whatever prescribed limits that have been put into place."

## The Valley Deaths

## NELMS MEMORIAL FUNERAL HOME -

2501 Carmichael Avenue NW - Huntsville, AL 35816 -  
(256) 539-8189

Graveside service for MS. JUANITA MCCAULLEY BOOKER (b. 1948) was held Friday, November 27, at Valley View Memorial Gardens with Reverend Dr. Oscar L. Montgomery, Sr. officiating.

Graveside service for MRS. MARGARET S. TAYLOR (b. 1934) was held Saturday, November 21, at the Berkley Community Cemetery with the Reverend Joe Kelly officiating.

Funeral service for MR. WILLIAM LEE TONEY (b. 1969) was held Wednesday, November 18, at the Nelms Memorial Funeral Home Chapel.

Graveside service for MRS. ELIZA K. STONE (b. 1927) was held Tuesday, November 17, at Maple Hill Cemetery with Brother John Branch officiating.

ROYAL FUNERAL HOME - 4315 Oakwood Avenue -  
Huntsville, AL 35810 - (256) 534-8481

Graveside service for MRS. FREDDIE BALL SYLVESTER (b. 1925) will be 10 a.m., Friday, December 4, at Valhalla Memory Gardens (698 Winchester Road NE, Huntsville, Ala.) with Pastor Debleaire Snell officiating.

Graveside service for MOTHER LELIA WHITE (b. 1927) was held Tuesday, December 1, at the Huntsville Memory Gardens (6810 University Drive NW, Huntsville, Ala.) with Pastor T.C. Johnson officiating.

Funeral service for MRS. LUELLE DUNCAN ELLIOTT (b. 1942) was held Sunday, November 29, at the Royal Chapel of Memories with Pastor Derrick Langford officiating.

Funeral Service for MR. JEFFERY LAMAR BOYCE, SR. (b. 1990) was held Saturday, November 28, at the Royal Chapel of Memories with Pastor Annias Green officiating.

Funeral service for CHAPLAIN COLONEL JAMES HENRY MELANCON (b. 1926) was held Tuesday, November 24, 2020 at the Royal Chapel of Memories.

SERENITY FUNERAL HOME - 2505 University Drive  
NW - Huntsville, AL 35816 - (256) 539-9693

Funeral service for MRS. BETTYE MCGINNIS will be held Saturday, December 5, at 2 p.m. at New Life SDA Church, 3912 Pulaski Pike NW, Huntsville, Ala.

Funeral service for MR. RAYNARD JONES (b. 1968) was held Friday, November 27, at the Johnson Legacy Center with Sylvia L. Moore officiating.



Perspectives on  
God Views  
+  
Current News

by tim allston



## Why did Joe Biden pick Kamala Harris?

### Ask the Samaritan Woman at Jacob's Well

*"Jesus realized that the Pharisees were keeping count of the baptisms that he and John performed (although his disciples, not Jesus, did the actual baptizing). They had posted the score that Jesus was ahead, turning him and John into rivals in the eyes of the people. So Jesus left the Judean countryside and went back to Galilee" - John 4:1-3, MSG.*

For the record, I have no factual evidence to substantiate this following what-if scenario of why Biden picked Harris.

#### A Win-Win-Win Object Lesson

However, in reading my Bible, it appeared as though Biden might have also studied carefully John 4:1-30, and then placed tracing paper over that story, and updated it to win the White House!

Although not exactly step-for-step, these two scenarios are pregnant with parallels and can be seen as a win-win-win situation.

#### Jesus and the Samaritan Woman, Meet Joe and the Senate Woman, . . .

John 4:1-3: Here the Pharisees - the Roman Empire-appointed Jewish leaders in Jerusalem - were keeping count of the baptisms performed by Jesus Christ in comparison to his forerunner and cousin John the Baptist. Pharisees were 1st century "political pollsters" - i.e., seeking to rate and rank Jesus and John as competitors.

Jesus would have none of that "comparison-itis" disease, which forced him to return home to Galilee.

Similarly, COVID-19 forced Biden to leave the campaign trail and return to his Wilmington, Delaware home.

Finally from verse 1: why didn't Jesus do the baptizing? Because his ministry was only for three years, he chose instead to train his disciples; this would elevate them into positions of top leadership upon his departure.

In parallel Barack Obama, Biden's popular forerunner stepped back and remained mum throughout Biden's primaries. This allowed for his successor Biden's own education of equipping and empowering himself and his base.

Q: Who are you allowing to be trained, for elevation after you exit?

tim allston is the author of the printed/digital/audiobook, *The U.S. Coronavirus Crisis and the Rise of the "Silver-Mettle" Leaders*, available now at <https://amzn.to/3cx1koV>.

# Tennessee Valley Calendar of Events

#### December 3

Huntsville City Council Meeting - 5:30-8 p.m.

#### December 4

Candlelight Christmas 2020  
Burritt on the Mountain  
\$40-\$50 per Car Load  
5-9 p.m.

#### December 9

Zoning Committee Meeting  
7:30 a.m.

#### December 10

Idea Competition for High School Students  
[www.be-entrepreneurial.org](http://www.be-entrepreneurial.org)  
9 a.m.-2 p.m. (Online)

#### December 12

Marlon Wayans  
Stand Up Live  
6:30-10 p.m.

#### December 18

Totally 80s Christmas Party  
SideTracks Music Hall  
9-11:55 p.m.

#### December 18-20

"Arnez J"  
Stand Up Live Huntsville  
Huntsville, Ala.  
[huntsville.standuplive.com](http://huntsville.standuplive.com)

#### December 19

Winter Solstice Market

Lowe Mill Arts & Entertainment  
10 a.m.-6 p.m.

#### December 21

Watercolor Doodles  
(Online & In-Person)  
Huntsville Art League  
6 p.m.

#### Rocket City Light Tour

[www.fbchhsv.org](http://www.fbchhsv.org)  
5-9 p.m.

#### December 22

The Legume Room Comedy  
Salty Nut Brewery  
7 p.m.

*"The most dangerous creation of any society is the man who has nothing to lose." - James Baldwin*



### Marshall England, Agent

600 Madison Street, SE - Suite B  
Huntsville, AL 35801  
Bus: 256.539.2014  
[marshallengland@marshallengland.com](mailto:marshallengland@marshallengland.com)

[www.marshallengland.com](http://www.marshallengland.com)

State Farm



## COVID-19 Assistance

### UNITED WAY COVID-19

Assistance Fund

Donate:

[www.uwmadison-county.org](http://www.uwmadison-county.org)

Get Assistance: Call 211

### SMALL BUSINESSES

[disastercustomerservice@sba.gov](mailto:disastercustomerservice@sba.gov)

gov

(800) 659-2955

### COVID-19- RELATED UNEMPLOYMENT

Alabama Department  
of Labor

(866) 234-5382

[labor.alabama.gov](http://labor.alabama.gov)

### MADISON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT (256) 539-3711

### LATEST COVID-19 INFORMATION

Alabama Department of  
Public Health

[www.alabamapublichealth.gov](http://www.alabamapublichealth.gov)

Centers for Disease Control  
and Prevention  
[cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)

### TAKEOUT/ DELIVERY RESTAURANTS

[https://hsvchamber.org/  
restaurant-deliveries-  
take-out-food-service-  
providers/](https://hsvchamber.org/restaurant-deliveries-take-out-food-service-providers/)

# Washington in One Minute



Here are the happenings in Washington, D.C., this week:

**1. ON THE FLOOR.** The Senate returned into session Monday, while the House postponed the start of votes until Wednesday evening. Last week, House and Senate negotiators reached agreement on an overall spending ceiling of \$1.4 trillion for the 12 FY2021 appropriations bills, but there is not yet a plan on whether Congress will attempt to pass the bills in batches or in one large omnibus bill. There is little evidence of any progress on a new COVID-19 relief bill, but there has been some speculation that certain COVID-related items, such as a new round of small business PPP loans, new

unemployment benefits, and an extension of the current federal policy to suspend student loan payments, stop collections, and waive interest on the loans, might be included with the FY2021 appropriations bills. House Democrats this week will pick a new chair to lead the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC), as well as new committee chairs, including the House Appropriations, Agriculture, and Foreign Affairs Committees.

**2. LATEST ELECTION RESULTS.** Incoming Sen. Mark Kelly (D-AZ)'s election was expected to be certified by the State of Arizona as early as Monday, which allowed him to take his place in the Senate this week,

narrowing the Senate GOP majority by 1 seat to 52-48 for the rest of the calendar year. To date, House Democrats have lost a net of 8 seats to the GOP and the House currently stands at 222 Ds to 206 Rs with 7 seats undecided for the 117th Congress, according to the Associated Press.

**3. NEW BIDEN STAFF.** This week, President-elect Biden is expected to announce his top picks to lead his economic team, including the new Secretary of the Treasury (widely reported to be former Fed Chair Janet Yellen). On Sunday, he announced the first all-female White House communications team, to be headed by White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki and White House Communications Director Kate Bedingfield. Last week, President-elect Biden announced the following cabinet picks:

**Anthony Blinken** – Secretary of State  
**Alejandro Mayorkas** – Secretary of Homeland Security  
**Avril Haines** – Director of National Intelligence

**Linda Thomas-Greenfield** – U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations  
**John Kerry** – Special Presidential Envoy for Climate  
**Jake Sullivan** – National Security Adviser

**4. CORONAVIRUS VACCINE.** On Tuesday (December 1) at 2:00 p.m. EST, the CDC's Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices held a meeting to vote on who should be the first to get a coronavirus vaccine once one is authorized. On December 10 at 9:00 a.m. EST, the FDA's Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee met in open session to discuss the Emergency Use Authorization of the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine.

Reportedly, Moderna has just announced that it will seek an Emergency Use Authorization for its vaccine today.

**5. SENATE GOP LUNCH CANCELLED DUE TO COVID.** In response to new COVID infections in the Senate, Senate Majority Leader McConnell (R-KY) has cancelled the weekly in-person GOP lunch (usually held on Tuesday), although votes on the floor will still be conducted in person. Senate Democrats have been holding their lunches remotely for the last several months.

**6. CENSUS CASE.** On Monday morning, the Supreme Court heard arguments (remotely) in the case of Trump v. New York, to decide whether the Trump Administration has the authority to exclude non-citizens from the recently-completed 2020 U.S. Census for purposes of apportioning seats in the House of Representatives. Impacted directly would be California,

Texas, and Florida, which have the largest undocumented populations and would be most at risk of losing congressional seats in the December reapportionment.

**7. TREE LIGHTINGS.** The lighting ceremony for the Capitol Christmas Tree on the West Lawn of the U.S. Capitol was held Wednesday, December 2, and the National Christmas Tree lighting ceremony at the White House Ellipse was held on Thursday, December 3.

Ron Hamm  
 Hamm Consulting Group  
 400 North Capitol Street, NW  
 Suite 585  
 Washington, DC 20001  
 T: 202-596-8384  
 rhamm@hammconsulting.com  
 www.hammconsulting.com

## AAMU Mourns the Death of Social Work Professor



The Alabama A&M University Family is mourning the November 24 death in Docena, Ala., of JoAnne McLinn, retired social work educator. McLinn retired in 2015 following decades of service as program field coordinator for the Master of Social Work Program.

Professor McLinn's contributions to social work education at AAMU are significant, stated Dr. Tonya Perry, professor and chairperson of the Department of Social Work, Psychology & Counseling at AAMU. "Through the scores of students she taught as a field instructor, Ms. McLinn's legacy will live on."

McLinn earned degrees from Tuskegee, University of Michigan (Ann Arbor) and the University of Alabama.

W&A  
 WOMACK & ASSOCIATES LLC

"Partnering With You to Make Informed Decisions"

\*Comprehensive Financial Planning \*Estate Planning \*Accounting Services  
 \*Tax Planning and Preparation for Individuals, Businesses, Estates and Trusts

**To learn more contact us:**

Lori A. Womack, CPA/PFS, CFP®  
 Managing Member

[lwomack@womackassociatesllc.com](mailto:lwomack@womackassociatesllc.com)

4650 Whitesburg Dr S, Suite 101  
 Huntsville, Alabama 35802  
 256-534-1360

# Tax Season Will Look Different: Prepare Now

(BPT) - It's no secret that 2020 has been a tumultuous year. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many Americans found themselves out of work - at least temporarily - and received unemployment benefits. Others may have experienced employment changes, like working from home or taking on multiple jobs. All of these factors will have even more of an impact come time to file income taxes on tax day, April 15, 2021.

"For many, the 2020 tax season will likely look different," says Mark Steber, Chief Tax Information Officer at Jackson Hewitt Tax Services. "The pandemic brought unexpected, overwhelming changes."

To help you prepare and get the maximum tax refund you deserve, Steber offers the following tax tips.

## 1. Understand how unemployment benefits work

If you received unemployment benefits this year, it may have been for the first time. Make sure you're aware of how they affect your taxes.

Unemployment benefits are taxable and must be reported to the IRS on your tax return. Taxable benefits also include any special compensation authorized under the Coronavi-

rus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act earlier this year. That means if you did not withhold enough taxes from your unemployment benefits, you could see a big tax bill or a much smaller tax refund than you normally receive.

Unemployment benefits can affect tax credits. Unemployment is considered unearned income, so it won't count toward certain credits. For example, you must have earned income to qualify for the Child Tax Credit or the Earned Income Tax Credit. Additionally, your adjusted gross income must be below certain levels to get certain credits.

## 2. Set money aside to cover unexpected taxes

If you received unemployment benefits and did not withhold any federal or state income tax, you'll need to pay tax on that money. To prepare, consider setting money aside now to cover those taxes on your 2020 return and brace yourself for a much smaller refund or no refund at all this tax season.

## 3. Take advantage of possible deductions

Every taxpayer will get a charitable donation deduction

for 2020. Make a list of any IRS-approved donations you made this year and locate any receipts. Whether itemizing or taking the standard deduction, under the CARES Act, all taxpayers are eligible to deduct up to \$300 worth of monetary donations to qualified organizations.

And while many Americans have been working at home for months, a home office deduction is not guaranteed. The home office deduction is only available to those who are self-employed.

## 4. Consider major life changes

Life goes on, even during a pandemic, and life changes can bring sizeable tax implications. Some changes that cause the biggest impact include getting married or divorced, having a baby or adopting a child, buying or selling property, retiring, or starting a business. If you experienced any of these events in 2020, know that your return will look different.

## 5. Keep track of important documents

Even if your taxes won't be affected by unemployment, make sure you gather all your documents, such as W-2 forms and 1099s for interest

dividends and even retirement distributions. Remember to include the Notice 1444 you received with your stimulus check for your 2020 tax records. Collect your charitable contribution totals, mortgage interest, property taxes you've paid, and any additional state and local income taxes paid for the year. If you were furloughed and able to pick up a temporary job, gather your W-2s for each job you worked. If you worked a side gig, make sure to keep a record of your income, the miles you drove, and any additional expenses. And if you're not filing single, be on the lookout for family members that may have been impacted to make your tax return more complicated. No matter your 2020 situation, follow these tips to prepare for any unexpected tax implications. For more information and help during the 2020 tax season, visit [jacksonhewitt.com](http://jacksonhewitt.com).

## Faith Initiative Scholarship Available

FAITH Initiative, Incorporated, a 501c3 nonprofit established by Fellowship Presbyterian Church USA, announces the annual scholarships to be awarded *Spring 2021*. The scholarships are open to deserving students from the Tennessee Valley who have been accepted to an accredited university or technical school and who demonstrate the potential to become a productive member of the community. Recipients are not required to be enrolled or accepted in an institution of higher learning *in Alabama* to receive the scholarships. Applications and requirements have been mailed to area high school coun-



selors and local churches. However, your assistance is requested in getting this announcement to high school seniors. Students selected from the Tennessee Valley will be informed by letter, and the formal announcement will be made at the Annual Fundraising Event of the organization scheduled for *Spring 2021*. Due to the current COVID 19, this event may be virtual. Successful applicants are expected to participate. Scholarship applications may be obtained from FAITH Initiative organization at [faithinitiativenonprofit@gmail.com](mailto:faithinitiativenonprofit@gmail.com) or call 256-714-9399. Applications must be received not later than *March 19, 2021*.



Woody Anderson Ford

256-539-9441

[www.WoodyAndersonFord.com](http://www.WoodyAndersonFord.com)

2500 Jordan Lane, Huntsville, AL



VOTING IS FUNDAMENTAL TO DEMOCRACY!

**WANT TO RESTORE YOUR VOTING RIGHTS?**

If you are an Alabama citizen we can provide Free Voter Rights Restoration assistance *via text!*

Has your voter registration application been turned down?  
Do you need to submit a Certificate of Eligibility to Register to Vote (CERV)?  
Do you need assistance in determining outstanding fines and fees for disqualifying convictions?  
Out of State or Federal convictions?

Text: (256)203-6827  
Call: (888) 306-8683

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ALABAMA

[LWVAL.org](http://LWVAL.org)

Restore Your Vote  
A PROJECT OF CAMPAIGN LEGAL CENTER

**WJAB**  
**90.9 FM**  
[www.wjab.org](http://www.wjab.org)