

Riley signs limited governance act

Governor Bob Riley has signed "The Alabama Limited Self-Governance Act," a new law that could grant limited home rule to county governments.

"This new law is a step in the right direction," Governor Riley said. "Limited home rule will result in more effective and responsive county governments and lessen Montgomery's power to decide matters that are purely local in nature and should be handled by the government closest to the people."

The new law gives counties authority to abate nuisances such as unsanitary sewage, noise, litter, pollution, overgrown weeds, junkyards and animals. However, a county commission would be able to exercise its new powers only if a

majority of voters in the county's unincorporated areas approve a referendum.

The bill does not give county commissions authority to levy taxes or make zoning decisions.

Governor Riley recognized the sponsors of the legislation, Senator Lowell Barron of Fyffe and Representative Jack Venable of Tallassee, for working effectively with all of the affected constituencies to secure passage of the bill. He also noted the key role played by the Association of County Commissions of Alabama, which worked cooperatively with the Legislature and Administration on the bill.

"This legislation helps put decision-making for a myriad of different activities in the right hands," said Senator Barron. "I

was proud to work collaboratively with Governor Riley, Representative Venable and the county commission association to help empower our local officials."

O.H. "Buddy" Sharpless, the Executive Director of the Association of County Commissions of Alabama, also praised the bill's passage into law.

"The issue of local decision-making has been discussed in Alabama for decades, which makes today's signing a significant accomplishment for the rural residents of this state," Sharpless said. "(County) commissions and local citizens will be better equipped to respond to local needs without waiting for the Alabama Legislature to come into session."