

# The Selma Times-Journal

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## Local

### The voters will decide

By Cassandra Mickens

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The Selma Times-Journal

On Tuesday, voters in the rural sections of Dallas County will not only decide which candidate is best suited for political office, but self-governance too.

The ballot for rural voters will include the question of whether or not governmental decisions are best made by local citizens on the local level - Should the Dallas County Commission be able to establish programs to deal with what the law calls health and safety powers, which addresses problems surrounding junkyards, litter and rubbish and pollution?

If left up to Probate Judge Johnny Jones, the answer is yes.

"The county commission passed a resolution to place the amendment on the ballot for the primary election because we think it would have a positive impact on Dallas County," he said.

"I would urge the people who live in unincorporated areas to support this legislation."

In a press-released statement, Gov. Bob Riley proclaimed he supports the self-governance amendment as well.

"This new law...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," he said.

The amendment is the result of the Alabama Limited Self-Governance Act, which was enacted last year. The act solely deals with unincorporated portions of the county and spotlights issues such as weeds, noise, unsanitary sewage and animal control. Jones stressed the act does not give the commission authority to levy taxes or establish a planning and zoning program, but allows the commission to strengthen the laws to make Dallas County a clean



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and safe place to live.

"(The act) in no way allows the county commission to increase taxes, underline capital or raise our salaries," Jones said. "In fact, it's very limited."

The legislation specifically prohibits the county from taking any actions inside a city's limits. The concept behind the act is that only voters in unincorporated areas should vote and the commission should only exercise its newly acquired powers in the unincorporated areas.

If the act is passed, the commission will proceed to adopt ordinances to implement the law. All ordinances must be advertised and subject to public hearings. Ordinances must also include provisions for notice to those accused to violating the ordinances and an appeals process to the county commission before the matter goes to any court of law.

After the ordinances are adopted, the commission will take the necessary steps to respond to any nuisances concerning the aforementioned issues.

Those who violate the ordinances are subject to a \$150 fine.

Although Jones believes the act will benefit the county greatly, he said voters do have the right to sign a petition to call a vote on repealing the powers.

For more information on the Alabama Limited Self-Governance Act or the Tuesday primary elections, call the board of registrar's office at (334) 877-2700 or (334) 874-2534.

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