

October 2015

CONGRESSWOMAN  
**TERRI SEWELL**  
REPRESENTING ALABAMA'S 7TH DISTRICT

Friend,

It is an honor to serve you in Congress! One of the most important responsibilities I have as your Representative is to update you on the work we are doing on your behalf. This newsletter serves as an update on the progress we have made both in Washington and in Alabama's 7th Congressional District in October.

For more information on recent developments in our office, please visit our website at <http://sewell.house.gov/>.

Sincerely,



### Rep. Sewell Secures \$20 Million Transit Grant for the City of Birmingham



I am proud to have helped secure a \$20 million TIGER Grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation for a 15-mile Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project which will connect 25 West and East Birmingham neighborhoods that are primarily low-income, communities of color.

One of the primary goals of President Obama's Ladders of Opportunity initiative is community revitalization. This project will help us create more economic opportunities for underserved communities, and contribute to the success of the Birmingham World Games in 2021.

The Birmingham BRT system will connect people and underserved neighborhoods to jobs, schools and community services throughout the downtown as part of a city-wide revitalization effort. BRT will improve access and mobility for residents and visitors by providing safe and reliable transit. Funding will also be used to add or upgrade sidewalks, crosswalks, and traffic signals. Some sections along the BRT route will include dedicated bike lanes.

Birmingham is a City on the rise, and this project will support our efforts to improve our public transportation, and revitalize the Magic City.

### SCLC Regional Voting Rights Summit



I was honored to serve as a guest speaker for the "Freedom Luncheon" during the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's (SCLC) Regional Voting Rights Summit in Tuscaloosa on October 30. The focus of the summit was on mobilizing our communities in the fight for voting rights. My office recently launched #RestoreTheVOTE, a national legislative strategy geared to generate support for the Voting Rights Advancement Act (VRAA). I introduced the VRAA in June to restore federal preclearance protections requirements to jurisdictions that have a recent history of voter discrimination. I look forward to partnering with SCLC and its dedicated members in restoring voter protections in Alabama and across the country

## Military Academy Night



Thanks to Ramsay High School for hosting our "Military Academy Day," where I shared information about the nominations process. Our nation's prestigious service academies provide young men and women with a top-quality college education and prepare them for successful careers as military officers.

## Constituent Success Story

A Tuscaloosa County veteran contacted our Tuscaloosa office for assistance with a Veterans Affairs claim that he filed before 2012.

Our office then contacted the Veterans Administration Regional Office (VARO) to inquire on the status of his claims. Working with the VARO, we identified the delays and successfully resolved his claim. The veteran was granted a combined service connected evaluation of 90 percent, and received a retroactive payment of more than \$88,000.

## Connect With Us

Please be sure to "like" us on [Facebook](#), and follow us on [YouTube](#) and [Twitter](#) to receive Congressional updates and keep abreast of office events!

It is an honor to serve the 7<sup>th</sup> District in Congress. I'll be back in touch again soon!



## Rep. Sewell Hosts Town Hall on Budget Cuts

On Wednesday October 14, my office hosted a town hall meeting in Wilcox County to discuss the effects that state budget cuts have had on rural Alabamians. During the event, we received first-person accounts from constituents on how they were impacted by the closure of Roland Cooper Park and the local driver's license office. State officials also joined us to outline what's next as state budget shortages continue to threaten access to services in rural Alabama.

The meeting was part of my commitment to telling the stories of those living in the Black Belt who have been disproportionately impacted by cuts in essential services by the state legislature. My office plans to host more town halls throughout the district to make sure that we highlight these stories.



## #ShameOnAL



My office sent a letter to Attorney General Loretta Lynch calling for a full, and thorough investigation into the decision to close 31 driver's license offices across Alabama. This ill-conceived decision left 8 out of the 14 counties in my district – which is the only majority minority district in the state – without a Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to issue an Alabama driver's license.

Many of the residents affected by this decision were faced with having to travel miles outside of their communities to take a driver's tests and obtain state-issued identification. It also meant that those who have limited modes of transportation would be denied an equal opportunity to obtain a means to vote.

In a state that has adopted one of our nation's harshest voter ID laws, this decision threatened the civil and human rights for an estimated 250,000 Alabamians do not have an acceptable form of identification.

I met with Governor Bentley to express how this decision would silence the voices of so many of them. The Governor agreed to reopen the DMVs, but only one day a month.

The Governor's decision to reopen the offices is a reflection of why it is so important to make our voices heard. We must remain vigilant in our demand for equal access to essential services, and I will continue to stand strong with my constituents in this fight.