

## Call to Action for a Patriotic State

Many citizens in Alabama, even more nationwide, do not know that America's federal holiday, Veterans Day, was founded in Birmingham. I grew up in the Birmingham Area and did not know until decades after graduating, while conducting research for this book, of the historical significance of Veterans Day in our community. Birmingham has an opportunity to brand itself nationally as a historic and great place for patriotic events.

We offer ideas to encourage higher level creative thinking and cooperation to lead to enriched education and support of Veterans Day—leading to more patriotic events choosing Alabama, with businesses and agencies serving more visitors.

1. The Governor and administration could plan for and state intent to be—and be known as—a national destination for Veterans Day and patriotic reunions in the U.S. This initiative merits strategic consideration as one of the priorities to cast Alabama's positive branding nationally in the minds of Americans, plus boost education and tourism.
2. The City of Birmingham could expand the supportive role as host to America's first Veterans Day to the next level to *brand Birmingham* as the birthplace of Veterans Day and as a "Top 5 City" joining other historically patriotic US cities like Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC as great destinations for patriotic reunions and other events.
3. The Greater Birmingham and Convention Bureau, whose primary mission is to attract groups to our area to rent rooms and meeting space in our hotels, could help lead the effort to promote Birmingham as a center for Veterans Day reunions and related patriotic events. Event planners can choose Alabama in November and have a banquet, luncheon, parade, educational programs, social occasions, and more events already provided as core venues. With golf as a top convention activity, Alabama can become known even more as a center for great golf. Visiting groups who

stay for the weekend likely can enjoy great football in the city or nearby, another distinction of the state and region. These and other attractions complement cultural and entertainment options. The Veterans Day committee, City of Birmingham, Operation New Birmingham, Region 2020, Birmingham Business Alliance, and others whose mission it is to attract people and resources to Birmingham and Alabama can help coordinate efforts to boost impact. More businesses along the parade route can show support to impress a growing number of visitors beyond our community while benefiting from positive customer and community relations. This effort merits one organization amongst the groups stepping up to coordinate activities to get maximum value. An internship or consultancy by graduate students could provide effective, inexpensive brainpower to help develop conclusions and strategy for expanding this strategic initiative. Because Founder Raymond Weeks and his wife attended Birmingham-Southern College, as have some children and grandchildren, added meaning could come if BSC took a lead role through an academic project or volunteerism. The BSC page that has appeared for years on the Veterans Day printed program could be enriched by noting the relationship with Raymond Weeks and his family. The University of Montevallo has increasing opportunity, in part due to The American Village and the Alabama National Cemetery, to brand itself distinctive offering unique programs on patriotic education and service cooperatively through the Schools of Education and Business. UAB as the institution in closest proximity to Veterans Day activities and with the greatest resources could influence teacher preparation, curriculum development, community and business development, and advancement to fund a program with local and national service and reputation. Samford has a school of divinity as well as of education, which makes them uniquely qualified to advance curricula for spirituality related to serving in conflict as well

as teaching values in schools. An Alabama university could take the lead for creating resources for educators to teach patriotic school values like courage, patriotism, and citizenship. I expect UAB or Montevallo could be prospects to establish a center that connects patriotic history, education, and business that should have direct impact on teaching and tourism in Alabama. Civitan International was founded in Birmingham with much of its mission focused on development of “citizenship.”

4. School superintendents, principals, and faculty at every school could invest at least 5-10 minutes annually to teach students what America’s Veterans Day means and the historical significance about its founding in Alabama. This is part of our history and merits required mention in curricula. Teachers can relate lessons for this history to required teaching of values, such as “patriotism” and “citizenship.” As more children know about Veterans Day, I envision more telephone calls to family members who live away inviting them to come home for the holiday, such as “Granddaddy, can your military reunion come to Birmingham so you can come see us?” The result: enhanced quality of life, plus increased tourism and economic return.
5. Media can tell the story of Veterans Day—and Alabama’s role in it. This will benefit local citizens and help more cities become increasingly aware that Birmingham citizens initiated establishment of Veterans Day. As recently as 2003, another U.S. town claimed in a publication that they hosted the first Veterans Day in America. Our state and local governments, schools, businesses and professional groups should lead so we are accountable for informing the country. Troy University is a leading provider of distance learning to military personnel on bases worldwide—they could film and/or broadcast desired parts of Veterans Day to an international audience as a service and a strategy to attract more students, plus earn goodwill.

6. Bookstores, shops, and other businesses can feature patriotism books plus other mementoes and gift items, especially during the first two weeks of November, for a growing number of visitors for Veterans Day and reunions, as well as other gift buyers. A national bookstore founded in Alabama, Books-A-Million, could increase sales and boost community relations by taking the lead among stores to sell items that support the spirit of Veterans Day. When we are at war and when many schools and businesses close for the day, it seems wise for bookstores to at least have a table with books related to patriotism, history, leadership lessons influenced by military education, as well as flags, patriotic music, and greeting cards displayed for sale. In many markets, this would be a new tradition that could earn recognition from business schools and authors.
7. Communities throughout Alabama can celebrate with their own unique traditions to serve their citizens. Some Alabama cities may seek to co-sponsor and travel with their citizens to Birmingham to participate in events already organized to cooperate as patriotic citizens of Alabama while saving time and money for the supporting city. Ultimately, this is for America to appreciate brave warriors, renew patriotism in action, inspire young people with values like honor and citizenship, and make our country the best it can be.

Respectfully submitted to inspire more creative cooperation  
to serve our city, state and nation,

-Dr. David Dyson-

Founder, Patriotism in Action and Life Leaders

With support of my volunteer colleagues:

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