

Bice, others added to Alabama Economic Development Alliance board

Published: Wednesday, May 16, 2012, 4:44 PM



Michael Tomberlin -- The Birmingham News

By

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama -- The **Alabama Economic Development Alliance** added three new members to its board and began enacting the implementation model of the state's economic development plan at its quarterly meeting, the organization announced today.

A new position to the board is that of the Alabama superintendent of education. **State Superintendent Tommy Bice**, took his seat among other board members. Also, **Susan Price**, interim **postsecondary system** chancellor, and **Robert Witt, University of Alabama System** chancellor, took their positions on the board, replacing predecessors who no longer hold their titles.

"The addition of Dr. Bice to the Alliance completes the workforce development picture by ensuring that career tech and other K-12 programs are aligned with the opportunities in the state's economy and our children are prepared for success," said Secretary of Commerce Greg Canfield, chairman of the Alliance, in a statement.

Witt replaces Mack Portera, who announced his retirement as chancellor in January before Witt was chosen as his replacement in March. Price replaces Freida Hill, who resigned her position as head of the state's two-



Alabama state school Superintendent Tommy Bice is the newest member of the Alabama Economic Development Alliance board.

year college system in March. The holders of those positions get board seats on the Alliance per the executive order enacted in July 2011.

In addition to creating the Alliance, that executive order called for the creation of a three-year economic development plan to guide the state's efforts in the years ahead. That plan, **Accelerate Alabama**, was unveiled in January and adopted for implementation at the Alliance meeting in February.

"When Gov. Bentley tasked the Alliance with creating a strategic plan for economic development, this group invested time and energy into doing just that," Canfield said. "What makes the Accelerate Alabama plan noteworthy is that this group of leaders continues to put the same energy into the implementation of the plan."

At its most recent meeting on May 9, the Alliance adopted a tool to measure the strategic plan's progress that categorizes specific objectives into four areas of focus -- human capital, physical capital, financial capital, or target opportunities. The Alliance said as the plan moves forward, those with areas of responsibility will use the model to give updates as to the progress.

Bill Taylor, chief executive of the **Economic Development Partnership of Alabama** and a board member of the Alliance, told The Birmingham News today that the model is useful as the plan gains traction.

"Much progress has been made in a short amount of time," he said. "This groundwork is essential in getting us to where we need to be in terms of planning. Now we can concentrate our efforts on the implementation of the tactics, and hopefully see some meaningful results in an equally expedited manner."

Canfield said he expects to see tangible signs of progress from Accelerate Alabama and the model will enable quick response from the Alliance.

"This is a strong model that allows the Alliance to continue to build upon on its work, ensuring results that propel the economy of Alabama forward," he said. "It also provides a mechanism to identify and address areas that need attention and to develop action items that keep the plan moving."

The Alliance began gauging its successes in the three areas of focus for Accelerate Alabama:

- Recruitment: The **Alabama Department of Commerce** said project activity for new and expanding companies in the state the first quarter of this year was higher than the same period last year. Also, six bills aimed at economic development passed the Legislature this session.
- Retention: The **Alabama Workforce Training System** completed the third week of a 13-week training program for its employees that will increase their ability to help existing industry by connecting them to available programs.
- Renewal: The **Alabama Launchpad** business plan competition finale is slated for May 18 at **Alabama State University**. Six project ideas from three research universities are competing for \$100,000 in seed

money. An additional \$100,000 was awarded during the proof-of-concept competition in Birmingham on April 17.

The Alabama Economic Development Alliance is a group of leaders from the public and private sectors with direct interests in the state's economic development efforts. Officials spent six months developing the plan with input from local economic developers and others with an interest in the state's economic growth.

Taylor said that involvement from the rest of state will remain important during the implementation phases.

"Importantly, this has become a top-down, bottom-up approach as EDPA works with its community partners to align their own strategic plans with that of the state," he said. "Getting us all speaking the same language and moving in the same direction will bring greater synergies than existed before."

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