

## **Governor Riley Announces Phyllis Kennedy Retiring as Director of Industrial Relations and Revenue Commissioner Tom Surtees to Become New Director of Industrial Relations**

MONTGOMERY – Governor Bob Riley announced two Cabinet changes on Tuesday.

Alabama Department of Industrial Relations Director Phyllis Kennedy is retiring and will be replaced by Tom Surtees, the current Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Revenue. The Governor named current Assistant Revenue Commissioner Cynthia Underwood as the Acting Revenue Commissioner. All changes are effective Sept. 15.

“We have an outstanding Cabinet. All our agency directors are fantastic leaders who were already successful in other fields before they agreed to serve in our administration. Phyllis Kennedy is certainly one of the best. She has done an excellent job at Industrial Relations and has much to be proud of about her tenure there,” Governor Riley said. “Her leadership will be greatly missed, but we are fortunate that Tom Surtees has agreed to become our new director of Industrial Relations. Before he joined our administration, Tom had almost 30 years in the private sector in human resources management, where he handled many of the same issues he will face at DIR: workers compensation, unemployment compensation and workforce development.

“Assistant Revenue Commissioner Cynthia Underwood will become Acting Commissioner. She is both a certified public accountant and an attorney who has chosen to make a career at the Revenue Department. She has a lot of good experience and will serve the department, its employees and its customers well during this transition.

“We are also fortunate that Don Fisher is staying on as Assistant Director of Industrial Relations. Don has also done a great job, and I know Tom will rely on his knowledge and leadership as our new DIR director,” Governor Riley said.

Before Governor Riley appointed him Revenue Commissioner in February 2004, Surtees was Vice President of Human Resources with Birmingham-based Citation Corp. Prior to working at Citation, Surtees was an employee relations manager at Stockham Valves and Fittings, Inc. and a personnel manager for Lamson and Sessions Co. He earned a bachelor’s degree in Business Administration from the University of Alabama at Birmingham in 1979. In 1985, he received his Masters of Business Administration from UAB. In addition, Surtees served 27 years in the Alabama Army National Guard and U.S. Army Reserves, retiring in 1997 at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

Kennedy joined the Riley Administration as Director of Industrial Relations in 2003. Prior to that, she served for nine years as the state director of the National Federation of Independent Business, the nation’s largest small business organization.

During her four and a half years as Director of Industrial Relations, Kennedy has expanded the role of technology at the department to improve services while cutting the agency's workforce by more than 300. Among the changes that have taken place at DIR are:

- Unemployment tax payments, wage reporting and unemployment claims applications can now be completed online;
- Paper unemployment checks have been eliminated and replaced by debit cards, which reduce the likelihood of lost or stolen checks and saves taxpayers nearly \$1 million a year;
- Alabama's online Job Link was created to connect jobseekers with employers and to list job openings on the Internet. There are currently nearly 100,000 resumes and job openings listed at the site;
- The department's Mine Safety and Inspection Division is fully funded for the first time in its 30-year history;
- Operation Grateful Heart was initiated in conjunction with the Governor's Office and the U.S. Department of Labor to provide employment assistance to veterans.