



# STATE OF ALABAMA ETHICS COMMISSION



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, December 10, 2013

Quebec City, Quebec---

At its 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, the Council on Governmental Ethics Laws (COGEL) presented the 2013 COGEL Award to Jim Sumner, Director of the Alabama Ethics Commission. The COGEL Award is the highest form of recognition this organization confers. The COGEL Award is presented each year to an individual who has made a significant, demonstrable, and positive contribution to the field of campaign finance, elections, ethics, freedom of information, or lobbying regulation over a significant period of time.

Mr. Sumner has served as the Director of the Ethics Commission since 1997. His appointment came shortly after a major revision to the state's ethics laws and Mr. Sumner is credited for his leadership in implementing those revisions. During his tenure, he has played a critical role in further overhauling Alabama's ethics laws through the enactment of numerous pieces of legislation including the granting of subpoena power to the Ethics Commission; mandates for ethics training; prohibiting public officials from holding two or more taxpayer-funded jobs; tightening lobbyist expenditures; and expanding the availability of documents online. In his endorsement letter of Mr. Sumner for the 2013 COGEL Award, Bob Riley, Governor of Alabama, 2003-2011, stated that, "Reform would not have been possible without Jim Sumner!"

Previous recipients of the COGEL Award include Senator John McCain; Former President Jimmy Carter; Fred Wertheimer, President of Common Cause-US; Washington Attorney Kenneth Gross, one of the premiere Government Relations lawyers in the US; and David Freel, Former Director of the Ohio Ethics Commission.

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## SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

The term "COGEL" is pronounced with a long O and a hard G.

**WHAT IS COGEL?** COGEL stands for the Council on Governmental Ethics Laws. It is comprised of federal, state, county and municipal agencies throughout the United States and Canada. It is a professional organization for government agencies, organizations and individuals with responsibilities or interests in governmental ethics, elections, campaign finance, lobby laws and freedom of information.

**WHAT IS THE COGEL AWARD?** The COGEL Award, which is the organization's highest form of recognition, is conferred annually upon an individual who has, over a significant period of time, made meaningful and positive contribution to the fields of campaign finance, elections, ethics, freedom of information or lobbying. The person so honored does not have to be a COGEL member and may be anyone in the U. S. or Canada.

**WHO NOMINATED MR. SUMNER?** Mr. Sumner was nominated by Birmingham attorney Gregory P. Butrus of Balch & Bingham. Mr. Butrus is the founder and Immediate Past Chair of the Elections, Ethics and Government Relations Section of the Alabama State Bar.

### **WHO WROTE LETTERS OF SUPPORT FOR MR. SUMNER'S NOMINATION:**

Former Governor Bob Riley

Attorney General Luther Strange

President Pro Tem of the Senate Del Marsh

Speaker of the House Mike Hubbard

State Representative Paul DeMarco

Former President of the Alabama State Bar Jim Pratt

Director of the Alabama Law Institute Othni Lathram

QUOTE FROM MR. SUMNER: “This is an extraordinary honor for me and for the Alabama Ethics Commission. It recognizes all of the hard work that has been done over the last ten (10) years to enact significant reforms into the Ethics Law. It could not have happened without the strong support of the 24 Commissioners I have been privileged to work with and a truly dedicated staff of professionals.”

ATTACHMENTS:

Mr. Sumner’s Biographical Sketch

Presentation Photograph (L-R, Greg Essensa, President of COGEL, Jim Sumner,  
Greg Butrus, Balch & Bingham, Birmingham)