

New legislation aims to fund multi-million dollar Alabama state branding campaign

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MONTGOMERY, Ala. — A proposal to create a new, sustainable funding mechanism for a state branding campaign will be presented to a handful of state lawmakers ahead of the 2025 legislative session, Alabama Commerce Secretary Ellen McNair said on Monday.

“Quality of place and image really has never been addressed at the state level,” McNair said, speaking during the inaugural meeting of the Alabama Growth Alliance, a public corporation established this year to boost the state’s competitiveness in national and global markets.

“Communities across the state have embraced this, and other states have really seen this to be an important initiative.”

The AGA was created after the passage of [Senate Bill 52](#), sponsored by Sen. Greg Reed, R-Jasper, as a part of a [multi-bill package](#) designed to improve workforce development and a successor to a [series of economic incentive bills](#) adopted in 2023. Its members include state House and Senate leadership, as well as [eight business and industry leaders](#).

The AGA’s first meeting was virtual and kicked off by Gov. Kay Ivey, who championed the state’s recent success in drawing corporate investment.

“Just since I’ve been in office, Alabama has seen \$49 billion in investments, creating some 80,000 new jobs,” Ivey said. “Now is the time to build on that success, and the path for the economy of the 2030s, today.”

McNair spoke to the importance of “quality of place,” or the characteristics of a community that make it desirable to live and work in, when it came to drawing corporate investment.

“Quality of place is becoming more and more important to be able to recruit (and) keep your talent,” she said. “I really feel like this is an effort that commerce needs to be engaged in.”

To improve quality of place, McNair proposed, state leaders could support legislation that would fund a new state branding campaign, similar to “Pure Michigan,” which in 2023 directly [generated \\$156 million](#) in tax revenue for the state.

McNair said the proposal would likely cost the state “tens of millions” of dollars and commerce had worked with Alabama Finance Director Bill Poole to come up with a “creative and out-of-the-box” funding mechanism to pay for the initiative.

McNair didn't share many details about the draft bill she and her team had put together, but said that it would create a new funding mechanism similar to that of the Alabama Tourism Department, which is **funded in part by the state's lodging tax revenue**.

"It will develop a mechanism where we eat what we kill, very similar to the Tourism Department where they receive funding based upon the lodging tax," McNair said, speaking of the draft bill. "We're looking to develop something similar. No new taxes, not taking money away from anyone else, but it is a creative way that we could possibly fund these initiatives."

Reed, who also sits on the AGA, agreed with McNair in that branding was a critical component of drawing corporate investment, calling it "super important." While Reed announced in November that he would be **stepping down** from his role leading the Senate as its president pro tempore, in January he'll **begin a new role** as senior advisor on workforce transformation for Gov. Kay Ivey.

"We've got to create an image, create an atmosphere that people across the globe, certainly across America, or in Alabama understand how exciting it is to be in Alabama, and all of the things that we have to offer."

McNair said that she would meet with every legislative member of the AGA – Rep. Anthony Daniels, D-Huntsville, Sen. Bobby Singleton, D-Greensboro, House Speaker Nathaniel Ledbetter, R-Rainsville, and Reed – over the next 30 days to present them with more details of the proposal.

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