



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

KAY IVEY
GOVERNOR

STATE OF ALABAMA

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

FITZGERALD WASHINGTON
SECRETARY OF LABOR

MEMORANDUM

Date: March 18, 2020

To: Alabama State Bar
Workers' Compensation Section

From: Steve Garrett, Director
Alabama Department of Labor
Workers' Compensation Division

Subject: Ombudsman Program

Please be advised that the Alabama Department of Labor (ADOL) is constantly monitoring the ongoing developments of the coronavirus (COVID-19) and the effect it's having on our office and the services we provide. At this time, the Ombudsman Program is continuing to operate to assist with the settlement of workers' compensation claims in Alabama. We are, however, making some modifications to our normal procedures.

1. Whenever possible, ADOL is asking attorneys, employers & claimants to postpone any previously scheduled mediations and benefit review conferences that are currently set through April 6, 2020. This date may be extended, however, due to COVID-19 related restrictions still in place at that time.
2. For any mediations or benefit review conferences that cannot be rescheduled, ADOL is asking for those mediations to be held by telephone whenever possible. There are no waivers currently in place from the Supreme Court that would allow for mediations or benefit review conferences with pro se litigants to proceed without the required notarized advisements under Ala. Code §25-5-290(f)(1). The advisement of the pro se litigant's right to be represented by counsel and of his or her right to have any settlement reviewed must still be followed with notarized signatures.
3. If either of the above options is not possible, then ADOL requests that any face-to-face mediations be held only in offices that allow for social distancing as recommended by medical professionals and to monitor the presence of any participant that may meet one of the high-risk criteria (i.e. those with compromised immune systems, etc.)

To reschedule mediation dates or to alter plans for scheduled mediations during this time, please contact your ombudsman as noted on the attached list.



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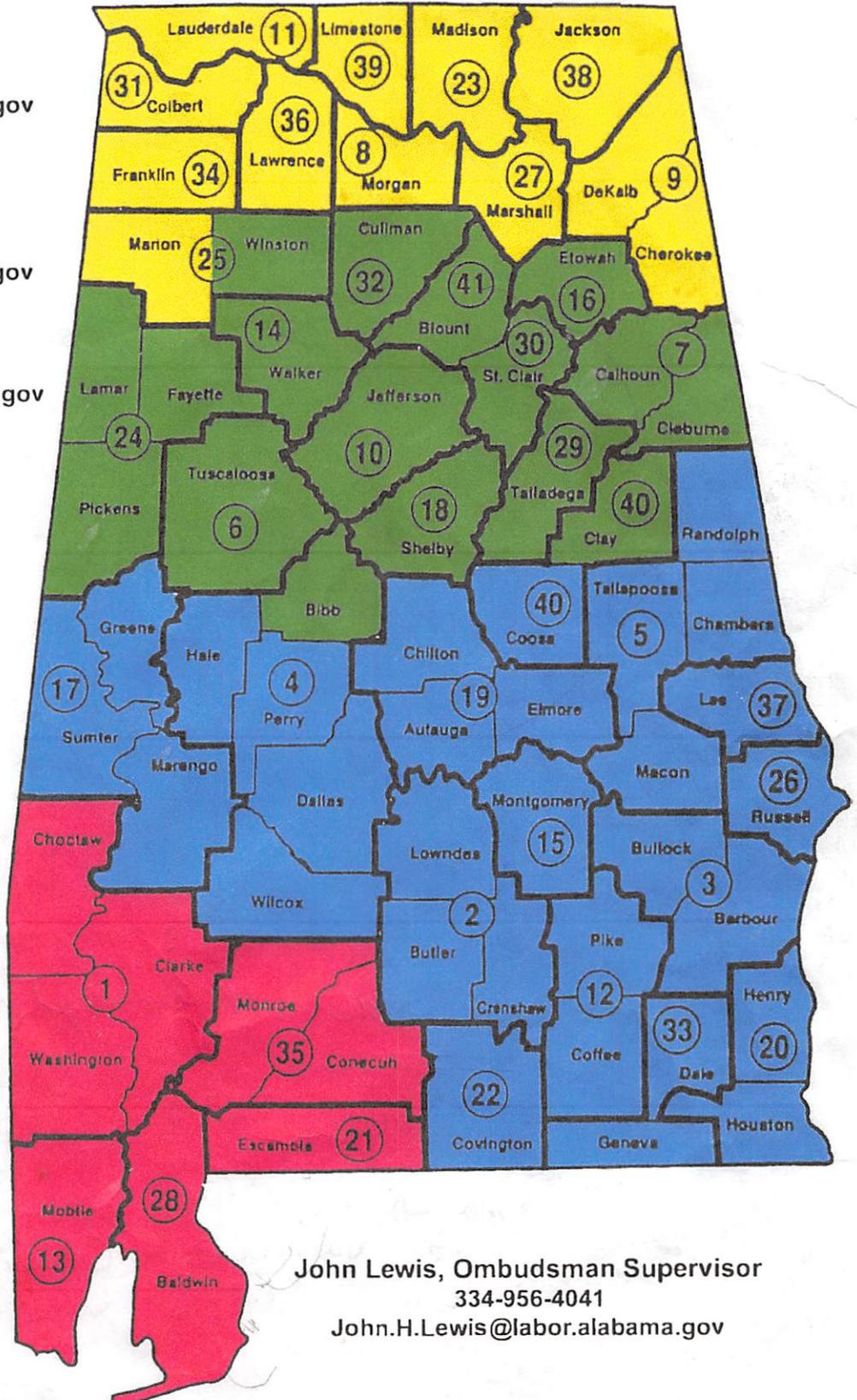
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