

ON THE LEVEL

A Service of the
State of Alabama
Home Builders
Licensure Board
Spring 2026



HOME BUILDERS
LICENSURE BOARD
www.hblb.alabama.gov



Display Your License It's The Law!

By Seth Gowan

Don't forget to display your valid home builders license number. When you don't, you're making it easy for unlicensed home builders to jeopardize Alabama's home building industry that you've built and harm consumers. **In 2024, the law was *amended* defining advertising** and requiring the license number be displayed. If you're not displaying your valid homebuilding license number, you lose business by not distinguishing yourself from unlicensed homebuilders. Unlicensed homebuilders can't display a valid homebuilders license number because they don't have one. You do!

Still have questions about the law?

We're breaking it down. Below are a few examples of when you need to display your home builders license number:

- Display your valid homebuilders license number on television advertisements.

- Display your valid home builders license number on your business cards.
- Include your valid home builders license number in the narrative of radio advertisements.
- Display your valid home builders license number on social media advertising and on website advertising.
- Display your valid home builders license number on vehicle decals, signage and wraps.
- When in doubt, display your valid home builders license number!

Include your valid home builders number when giving estimates and quotes. Remember, licensees are required to use a valid written contract, that includes your valid license number.



Celebrating the Distinguished Career of Chip Carden; Retiree Under Construction

By Melissa Stallworth

For 28 years Chip Carden has dedicated his service to the Alabama Home Builders Licensure Board. During that time, his leadership helped make many milestones possible. Notably, he introduced the “Ask to See the Card” campaign, which encourages anyone looking for residential and/or roof repair work to confirm that the individual doing the work has a valid license. Another standout from his 28-year career is the famous Builder Watch Hotline he launched, which provides a savvy-way to protect Alabama consumers.

In 2018, Carden positioned the board to expand its impact with an office expansion project providing additional office space and increased staffing capacity to serve Alabama consumers. This project was compounded with an earlier milestone where Carden successfully cleared the overhead expense of that same office space ensuring HBLB’s would remain “recession-proof”. Other cost-saving milestones he is credited with is the fact that licensees only had one licensee fee increase during his 28-year tenure. Looking back, Carden credited the dedication and integrity of the board highlighting how they “...take it as an honor to make the residential meetings.”

Pictured on right is Carden receiving an award from Stephanie Lee, Executive Director for the Mississippi State Board of Contractors. The award was presented to Carden on behalf of the National Association of State Contractors (NASLCA).

Aside from his incredible 28-year tenure, Carden is no stranger to the residential building industry. He began his career in 1993 as member services director for the Homebuilders Association of Alabama. In 1997, he joined the Greater Montgomery Home Builders Association as executive director and in 1998 ultimately joined the Alabama Home Builders Licensure Board as executive director and retired May 1, 2026.

As he enters the next chapter, he shared he’s looking forward to enjoying the lake, seeing his grandbaby and being on “chip time.” Before his official departure, Carden was honored at the April Board meeting for his leadership and service by board members, staff and other visitors. We will miss Chip. He advised everyone to “look for bigger and better things. Seth is going to do good things,” said Carden.



Seth Gowan Takes Over as Executive Director

by Melissa Stallworth



Seth Gowan, former counsel for the Alabama Home Builders Licensure Board (HBLB) agency, officially became the executive director on May 1, 2026. Gowan steps into this role following long-time Executive Director, Chip Carden.

Gowan served as the Board's Attorney General, which included oversight of all agency legal matters, prosecution of criminal actions against unlicensed builders, and interpretation of home builder licensure law to local building officials and the public. With nearly 10 years of leadership with HBLB, Gowan joined HBLB in 2016 and was central to authoring the statewide building code legislation passed by the Alabama Legislature and signed by the Governor during the 2024 regular legislative session. (continued)

Gowan's leadership has touched every aspect of the agency including transforming the agency's investigative efforts with the adoption of new investigator classes as well as expanding personnel classification levels with the support of state personnel. Prior to coming to the board, he was a Deputy District Attorney in Montgomery County. Seth gives his time and service between a number of organizations where he also serves in leadership roles.

He currently serves as Vice-President for the Kiwanis Club of Montgomery Foundation Board, and he is a past-President of the Alabama National Fair, the Kiwanis Club's primary fundraiser for over 70 years to give millions of dollars back to service organizations for children in the river region

He has also held various lay leadership roles at First United Methodist Church-Montgomery including adult and youth Sunday school teacher.

NEW Continuing Education Changes to Impact Renewal Season

by Darlene Burt

The continuing education requirement was added to promote industry professionalism. Since the 2022 renewal season, the Board requires active licensees to complete six (6) hours of continuing education which includes two (2) Alabama specific hours before being issued a renewal license. Beginning with the 2027 renewal season, which begins October 1, 2026, the Alabama specific requirement is being replaced with the subject matter specific requirement.

The two subject matter specific hours can be Alabama specific material. It can also be subject areas such as contracts, business organization and law, financial management, consumer relations, risk management, residential construction codes and standards, construction safety, planning and zoning, and bidding. Ninety-nine percent of the Alabama specific courses meet the subject matter specific requirement. Some classes that didn't meet the Alabama specific requirement will meet the subject matter specific requirement. This change benefits all licensees because they will have more courses to choose from to meet the specific hour requirement. More importantly, licensees have more course options for quality professional development. Further, the expansion of subject matter specific courses places an emphasis on issues that have been frequent disciplinary problems such as failing to have a written contract, doing business through an unlicensed entity, failing to utilize change orders, grossly underbidding jobs, not following plans, and compliance with local permitting and inspections. These courses will inform licensees in areas that can prevent them from being disciplined.

Most things regarding continuing education did not change. They are:

- Licensees do not have to complete continuing education before submitting the renewal application.
 - The designated qualifying representative must complete the continuing education for corporate entities.
 - Licensees who are 60 years old on or before October 1st can claim the age exemption. **This is a permanent exemption and does not need to be claimed annually.**
 - Licensees renewing for the first time are not required to complete continuing education. No action is required for this exemption.
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NEW Continuing Education Changes to Impact Renewal Season by Darlene Burt

- Inactive licensees are not required to complete continuing education. However, continuing education is required to return to active status.
- Notification that continuing education is complete must be received from the provider.
- Licensees are not required to submit continuing education certificates.
- The Board cannot recommend courses or providers. All courses and providers listed on our website have been approved by the Board.

In July, the Board will begin encouraging licensees to complete continuing education for the 2027 renewal season. Licensees must be careful to take two hours of courses that are annotated, **“***This course meets the subject matter requirement***”** Licensees completing continuing education between now and July 1, 2026, must complete two hours of courses that are annotated, **“***This course meets the Alabama specific or subject matter requirement***”**

Board Welcomes Communications&PublicRelationsSpecialist, MelissaStallworth

Melissa C. Stallworth brings a wealth of strategic public relations experience, with a track record of elevating public awareness, strengthening stakeholder engagement, and revitalizing high-demand industries such as workforce development, post-secondary education, and education reform. She thrives at the intersection of strategy and creativity, crafting communications that meet the evolving needs of the organizations she serves.



A proud graduate of Alabama State University, the Women's Policy Institute, and the North Alabama Home Builders Academy, Melissa brings both academic grounding and hands-on expertise to her work. Outside the office, she puts her project management skills to good use, enjoys sampling cuisines and cherishes time spent with family and friends.

FYI'S for the DQRs: What to do When a Corporate Licensed Company's Designated Qualifying Representative (DQR) Leaves the Company

by Lauren Latham

The designated qualifying representative (DQR) plays a vital role for any corporate licensee or applicant. The DQR is the individual who takes and passes the licensure exam and, thus, satisfies the experience and ability requirement that allows the corporate entity to even obtain a license. It is also the DQR's experience and ability that is on the line if any disciplinary action occurs. The DQR is required to be an officer, partner, member, or manager of the corporate entity. The DQR is someone who is directly involved with and responsible for the day-to-day management of the licensed home building company.

But what happens when the DQR ceases to serve as the DQR? Pursuant to Ala. Admin. Code r. 465-X-3-.04(1)(b)2, a company has 45 days after the previous DQR ceases to serve in that capacity to appoint a new DQR who meets the experience and ability requirement for licensure. When does the 45 days begin to run you ask? Making sure the Board knows immediately when a DQR is no longer with the company is important for the company and the DQR. The company must take immediate action of getting a new DQR to maintain licensed operations.

The individual DQR will want to avoid any problems or confusion post-separation. Oftentimes, it winds up being both the company and the DQR notifying the Board of the separation.

But there is a distinction in the Board's rules between when a DQR leaves a company and when a DQR passes away or suffers a mental or physical incapacitation. This distinction was a change in the law by the Alabama Legislature in response to the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020. The Board legal staff, working closely with the late Representative Howard Sanderford amended Alabama Code Section 41-9A-3 (1975). This change brought about new regulations to help licensed companies navigate the challenges of the sudden loss of the DQR due to death, mental or physical incapacitation.

While a company is still required to notify the Board of the DQR's vacancy similar to the Ala. Admin. Code r. 465-X-3-.04(1)(b)2 provision, there is now a mechanism for the Board to assist companies navigate through the scenario when a DQR has passed away or suffered a mental or physical incapacitation so the company can maintain the license and operations. (Continued)

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FYIs for the DQRs: What to do When a Licensed Company's Designated Qualifying Representative Leaves the Company

by Lauren Latham

Ala. Admin. Code r. 465-X-3-.04(1)(b)3 allows a company to claim a hardship waiver within 45 days of the DQR's death. A hardship waiver, if approved, gives a company an additional 135 days after the date of death or incapacitation of the DQR to allow a person meeting the experience and ability requirements to become the new DQR of the company. While that 135 days may not be extended, that additional time allows the company and successors to work through any licensure issues that can occur when a company has to undergo an ownership or management transition.

The DQR of a company serves many roles and has to meet many requirements to serve in that capacity. The Board recognizes that the last thing a company or family needs to worry about during this difficult time is what is going to happen to the home builders license. Since these post-Covid changes, the Board legal and licensure staff has been able to help companies navigate the very challenges contemplated as a result of the sudden death of a licensee's DQR. For more information on the important role the DQR plays or what to do if faced with the loss of a DQR, please contact the Board.

Statewide Residential Building Code Update

by Seth Gowan

In 2024 the Alabama Legislature passed, and Governor Ivey signed into law to give the Home Builders Licensure Board the authority to establish the statewide residential building and energy codes. The Alabama Residential Building Advisory Council is currently conducting meetings to put the finishing touches on its recommendations slated to go to the Board by August 27, 2026, meeting for final approval. The proposed code will then be submitted for rule adoption in compliance with the Alabama Administrative Procedures Act.

The statewide residential building code will go into effect January 1, 2027. The code will establish the minimum standards that residential home builders will adhere to in local jurisdictions that do not have an already adopted residential building code. In those local jurisdictions that do have an adopted code and enforcement, no change is necessary. However, the law does require that if amendments or changes are made after January 1, 2027, those local jurisdictions will have to at minimum come into compliance with the statewide code. Stay tuned for more information regarding the statewide residential building code.

MYTH vs. FACT

Welcome to the section that sheds light on facts vs. myths to set the record straight.

Fact: When a homeowner is acting as the builder [their own contractor], the homeowner is exempt from the licensure requirement if they don't sell or offer to sell the residence within one-year of completion. Though the homeowner is acting as the builder [their own contractor], they still meet the definition of a homeowner pursuant to the Home Builder Licensure Law. Therefore, anyone they hire to perform work (when the cost of the undertaking exceeds \$10,000 or exceeds \$2,500 for roofing) must hold a valid home builders license.

Myth: A homeowner can hire anyone (no license needed) since they are acting as the builder. This is a scenario that is being used as an example.

NEW STAFF/PROMOTIONS

Every day the board strives to serve our licensees and consumers. Our board is incredibly grateful for the dedication of all staff and the addition of new and newly appointed staff. The board recently welcomed Daniel Davenport, Angie Kidd, Melissa Stallworth, Louie Whitfield and Akira Williams. Also, recent promotions include Seth Gowan, Brittany Jones, Sammie Jameison, Reshanda Maxwell and Melanah Poole.

Administrative Professional's Day

In honor of administrative professional's day, our dedicated administrative staff was honored with a surprise breakfast by executive director, Seth Gowan. When they aren't juggling calls and administrative duties, you'll find the administrative staff prioritizing multiple responsibilities.



**Protect Alabama Consumers and Your
Industry.**

Builder Watch Hotline

1-800-304-0853

Report Unlicensed Builder Activity!

(All calls will remain anonymous)

You can find us here. Follow us on social media!



Post Office Box:

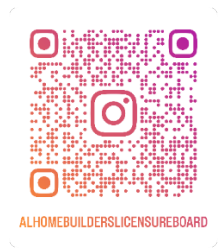
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www.hblb.alabama.gov



<https://www.facebook.com/ALHomeBuildersLicensureBoard>



All current disciplinary actions and unlicensed builder prosecutions can be found on the HBLB website at www.hblb.alabama.gov/disciplinary-actions/. All actions remain posted for a period of ninety (90) days. Inquiries pertaining to disciplinary actions and unlicensed builder prosecutions must be submitted in writing to the Home Builders Licensure Board, Legal Division, P O Box 303605, Montgomery, Alabama 36130-3605.