

# Johnston earns Rising Star award from Tuscaloosa Chamber of Commerce



Slade Johnston is pictured accepting his award from Bobby Bragg and Kimberly McMurray of the West Alabama Chamber of Commerce. (Submitted photo)

TUSCALOOSA — Choctaw County native Slade Johnston was awarded the H. Pettus Randall III Entrepreneurial Rising Star Award by the West Alabama Chamber of Commerce during the organization's annual awards banquet last Thursday, February 6, at the Bryant Conference Center in Tuscaloosa.

Named in honor of the late H. Pettus Randall, III, a successful entrepreneur and community leader in the area, the award is given to a local business owner whose innovation is making a significant impact on the community and their respective industries.

Johnston earned the honor for his Trips4Trade business that allows outdoor and sports enthusiasts to swap vacation, fishing, and hunting trips, as well as sports tickets.

"This was an incredibly humbling award that we didn't expect," Johnston said. "I am very blessed to have the support of Tuscaloosa that I have always had from Choctaw County as well."



## Sun-Advocate publisher named 2nd Vice-President of Alabama Press Association

BIRMINGHAM -- Sun-Advocate Publisher Dee Ann Campbell, right, was elected 2nd Vice-President of the Alabama Press Association during their annual Media Summit held in Birmingham last Friday. The APA is the statewide trade organization made up of newspapers throughout the state. The organization includes 24 daily newspapers and 99 non-daily newspapers, along with over 100 associate members, as well as member magazines. Campbell is pictured with APA Executive Director Felicia Mason. (Submitted photo)

## DOLLARS and SENSE

### Losses continue to mount for postal service

The U.S. Postal Service (USPS) has the dubious record of a continuous flow of red ink for 13 consecutive years.

While USPS increased its revenues from 2018 by \$514 million — by raising postage rates and expanding its package delivery business — it still had a net loss of \$8.8 billion. Notably, about four-fifths of the loss was required contributions for health-care benefits of retirees.

Losses associated with retirement benefits began in 2006 and have continued since then. That year, Congress passed a law requiring USPS to pre-fund the cost of providing retiree health benefits. The law has reduced the risk of taxpayers having to provide funding to bail out USPS' unfunded retiree health benefits. Because the system was so largely underfunded, the costs are high.

Being a part of the U.S. govern-



**Dr. Wayne Curtis**  
Contributing columnist

ment has further hamstrung it. Congress sets the rates for its services. In addition, there is political pressure to retain many money-losing operations throughout the country, including facilities that should have been closed years ago.

USPS also needs to reexamine and revise its policies. During the next decade, it is expected to spend more than \$800 million replacing old delivery trucks. In purchasing vehicles, USPS pays little attention to price and reliability, insisting on add-ons that inflate costs. Moreover, the agency prefers "green," or electric, vehicles that are more expensive to operate and will probably continue to be costly in the future. It also prefers to buy American-made vehicles that are usually more expensive than foreign-made ones.

Over the next decade, the Tax-

payers Protection Alliance estimates the "green" and domestic preferences will add an additional \$220 million per year above and beyond the cost of the fleet.

By eliminating the preferences, USPS could save \$2 billion by the end of the decade.

That USPS's business model has become obsolete and no longer workable is obvious. It has been overtaken by changes in technology, markets, and customer needs and preferences.

Other than privatization — an approach that has been discussed previously in this column — what else can be done to save USPS from its red ink bath? The Trump administration has directed the Postal Service Board of Governors to create a plan to restore solvency to the agency. He has specified that it include large, structural changes that will likely involve privatizing and selling off parts of the agency.

Hopefully, this will help shrink the avalanche of losses. But don't count on it!

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