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HB 103 aimed to protect small businesses from COVID closures

*John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press*

While nobody wants to see Alabama return to a governor's state of emergency like residents faced in 2020 and 2021, the recent surge of Omicron variant COVID-19 cases has once again created that possibility.

If that happens, though, a new law will ensure fairness among businesses and all of them, regardless of essential or non-essential classification, to remain open if they follow the required safety precautions.

Rep. Jamie Kiel (R-Russellville) introduced HB 103 last year after fielding numerous complaints from residents and small business owners asking why they had to close their

doors while businesses like Walmart and CVS Pharmacy remained open and thrived during the pandemic.

HB 103 was signed into law by Gov. Kay Ivey on April 7, 2021. Basically, the law allows any business entity or church, mosque, synagogue or bona fide religious institution to remain open during a state of emergency as long as the entity "complies with all of the safety precautions issued by the Governor, a state department or agency, or a county or municipal governing body or agency thereof."

Small business owners were outraged in 2020 when they were forced to close their doors if they didn't meet the state's 'essential' criteria. Additionally, churches were not

See 'HB 103,' page 3

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Qualifying for 2022 primaries underway

*John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press*

Qualifying for the 2022 Alabama Republican Party Primary will begin on Tuesday, January 4, 2022, at 8:30 a.m.

This includes qualifying for all elected offices at the federal, state and local level. The qualifying period will end on Friday, January 28, 2022, at 5 p.m.

Qualifying for the 2022 Alabama Democratic Party Primary began December 6, 2021 and extends through Friday, January 28, 2022 at 5 p.m.

Positions up for election on the

2022 Alabama Democratic and GOP Primary ballot include:

- Governor
- Lt. Governor
- Attorney General
- Secretary of State
- Commissioner of Agriculture and Industry
- Treasurer
- State Auditor
- One U.S. Senate seat (Richard Shelby's seat)
- All U.S. House of Representatives seats
- Two Alabama Supreme Court seats
- Two Public Service Commission

See 'QUALIFYING,' page 7

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Jennifer Murphy Benford, 76, of Phil Campbell, passed away on Thursday, December 23rd. Interment Phil Campbell Cemetery.

Marie Davis Mays, 90, of Phil Campbell, passed away on Wednesday, December 22nd. Interment at Mountain View Baptist Church Cemetery.

Shelia Gail Miller, 70, of Spruce Pine, passed away on Saturday, December 18th. Interment at Spruce Pine Cemetery.

Olena Arthur Pike, 97, of Russellville, passed away on Tuesday, December 21st. Interment at Orange Baptist Church Cemetery.



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Tune in to WGOL 100.7 FM to hear "Real Estate Tips with Willodean" weekdays at 8 a.m. and 12 p.m. Davis is the owner/broker of Davis Realty & Associates in Russellville.



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'HB 103,' from page 1

allowed to hold services, unless their members sat in cars and listened to the radio or watched online.

All that while Walmart, Lowe's, CVS and other big boys remained open and sold many of the items the small businesses specialized in.

HB 103 put an end to that disparate treatment.

Kiel said one of the worst examples of the essential/non-essential classification came when the State of Alabama's ABC package stores were allowed to remain open as 'essential,' but people could not attend church services because they were deemed 'non-essential.'

"That was the height of ridiculousness," Kiel said. "A store like Hibbett's that sells tennis shoes and t-shirts is forced to close, yet Walmart remains open selling t-shirts and tennis shoes."

Kiel, who owns Kiel Equipment, which sells mowers, power tools and lawn care accessories like blowers, weed trimmers, etc., said he received no opposition from any consultant or organization when he introduced the bill.

"Whatever the governor or state health officer says the limit on number of people inside a building is, any business should be able to open up subject to those guidelines. It should apply to all businesses, not just certain ones," Kiel said.

Alabama has seen more than 9,200 deaths from COVID-19 in 2021, and numbers of positive cases are rising, with 9,311 new positives in the past seven days, as of December 26, 2021.

While Ivey has said she has no plans to reinstate a state of emergency, the severity of COVID-19 remains fluid and any state action will be driven by how the COVID numbers look.

Regardless of the direction Ivey takes, small businesses and churches will have the same opportunities to continue to serve the public, as long as they comply with all safety precautions.

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My take on this... Christmas memories and simpler times

I have wondered lately if people can remember the old fashioned Christmas trees. The cedar trees that we would look for in our pastures and along the sides of the gravel roads. We would choose the one we thought looked the best. Daddy would cut it down, put it in the back of our old family truck and wrangle it in the door.

We had big Christmas lights that probably had four or five different colors on a strand. We had silver icicles that we had to reuse each year. When the icicles were getting fewer and fewer; we would get to buy a new box. It was exciting to have a lot of them again. We had gold "rope-looking-garland" and a little silver and we would try to use only one color if we had enough that it didn't look too bad. A star on top completed the tree.

I remember one year my mother bought two boxes of nine beautiful colorful ornaments with glitter on them. They were the prettiest things I'd ever seen.

Our tree always had string tied around it which was attached to a nail that Daddy hammered into the wall to keep our tree from toppling over. Of course the best side always faced out. It seemed we never had one that was pretty and full on all sides. That wasn't that big of a deal because the back would sit real close to the wall. That way the few lights and garland and ornaments we had could be placed on the front and sides to make it look like we had more than we really did.

Donald and I would usually get two gifts. I'd always get some kind of a doll and usually a puzzle because I enjoyed working on puzzles while we would all sit together and watch The Lawrence Welk Show and the other shows Mother and Daddy watched. I think Donad would get some kind of toy gun, but I don't remember what else.

The night before Christmas we never wanted to go to sleep. We wanted to see Santa Claus bring our gifts and put them under our tree. I never realized until I had married and had two boys of my own what a long night it could end up being just waiting on the kids to fall asleep.

I can look back on those times and bask in those beautiful moments when



Gail Motes

all seemed right in the world. The simpler times when we had a mother who stayed home and worked so hard. She would always be with us. There weren't such things as babysitters and school sports and activities when I was young. It was tree climbing and playing outside until we were called inside to eat.

Supper was a family time. We all sat at the table and ate good ole home cooked food and Mother always had a home-made pie or cake or cobbler for dessert. Daddy always sat at the end of the table. We would all eat and talk and enjoy our time together. Daddy didn't like a lot of foolishness at the supper table. Laughing was one of the things that got me in trouble a lot. He didn't mind if I'd laugh and then stop, but I'd often get my "giggle-box" turned over and have to leave the table and go to another room; that was away from the table. A lot of times, I was the only one at the table eating because I couldn't stop laughing.

Some of my childhood days; being with my Daddy were the best memories of my life. He was strict, but I knew what I could and couldn't get away with. Mother was the lenient one. She would say over and over to not do whatever my brother and I were doing that we wouldn't suppose to, but we didn't mind her as good.

She would threaten to tell Daddy on us, but never would. He would give some hard whoopings with his belt. Marks would be left for days and she didn't like him whipping us because she would tell him he hit us too hard. They did hurt real bad, so I would mind him pretty good. I never did like seeing him coming after me with a belt in his hand. He would never change his mind once he had the belt.

I hope you have enjoyed going back in time with me. Speaking of time, this article is a few days after Christmas. I missed the deadline and I still wanted to share some of my "old days" with you. I'm saying all that, I'd like to say that I hope you had a safe and lovely Christmas.

Happy New Year my friends.

And as always, until later...

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Multiple county establishments receive positive health ratings

*John Pilati
Franklin Free Press*

28 of the 36 Franklin County establishments that received health ratings during the period of November 21, 2021 through December 21, 2021, had scores that fell into the "satisfactory compliance" range.

Health ratings are required to be prominently posted in all food/lodging establishments. Scores are graded by the Alabama Department of Public Health inspectors on a 100-point scale.

Establishments with scores of 85 to 100 are considered to be in "satisfactory compliance" and are routinely inspected. Establishments scoring between 70 and 84 will be inspected again in 60 days, and those scoring between 60 and 69 will have another follow-up within 48 hours. Any establishment scoring below 60 will be immediately closed.

Areas of inspection by ADPH include management and personnel; food storage, preparation and service; equipment; utensils; linen cleanliness; plumbing and waste; poisonous or toxic material storage and an inspection of the physical facility or property.

28 of the 36 Franklin County establishments listed in the most recent food and lodging establishment ratings scored 85 or above, within the satisfactory compliance range.

The high score was 100, scored by Walmart #403 Bakery, 13675 Hwy. 43 North.

Other inspection scores of Franklin County businesses, in alphabetical order, included:

- B&J Cafe, 1327 Shellnut Loop, Phil Campbell, 94.
- Belgreen High School, 14220 Hwy. 187, Russellville, 94.
- Big Star #345 Deli, 406 4th St. SW, Red Bay, 85.
- Big Star Supermarket #345, 406 4th St. SW, Red Bay, 84.
- Bojangles Famous Chicken & Biscuit, 13810 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 97.
- C.J.'s Grocery, 14545 Hwy. 187, Russellville, 85.
- Cardinal Drive-In, 602 4th St. W., Red Bay, 89.
- Daisy Restaurant, 125 North Jackson Ave., Russellville, 76.
- El Quetzal Buena Vista Bakery/Restaurant, 118 E. Franklin St., Russellville, 84.
- Hodges Senior Center, 1942 Hwy. 172, Hodges, 96.
- Homestead Cafe, 6631 Hwy. 43, Spruce Pine, 88.
- Jack's #136, 521 4th Ave. SE, Red Bay, 90.
- Jack's Family Restaurant, 13640 Hwy. 43 N., Russellville, 87.
- Jay Raja, Inc., 109 Madison St. NE, Russellville, 83.
- La Nina Mexican Food, 113 N. Jackson Ave., Russellville, 91.
- Legacy Chevron, 13518 Hwy. 43 South, Russellville, 87.
- Mexico Bakery, 111 Franklin St. SW, Russellville, 99.
- Panda Buffet, 14633 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 75.
- Piggly Wiggly Deli #93, 518 4th Ave. SW, Red Bay, 75.
- Pollo Lo-Quillo, 115 Franklin St., Russellville, 91.
- Pupuseria y Taqueria Las 3 Fronteras, 519 St. Clair St., Russellville, 84.
- Red Bay Hospital, 211 Hospital Road, Red Bay, 95.
- Red Bay Tiger Mart, Inc., 211 4th Ave. SW, Red Bay, 96.
- Red Bay Yacht Club, 996 9th St. W, Red Bay, 91.
- Russellville High School, 1865 Waterloo Road, Russellville, 95.
- Steak Ops Russellville, LLC, d/b/a Doe's Eat Place, 114 N. Jackson Ave., Russellville, 93.
- Subway 24292, 15300 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 99.
- Subway 37464, 13675 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 91.
- Swamp John's Country Store, 5181 Hwy. 24, Red Bay, 82.
- Tharptown High School/Elementary, 145 Hwy. 80, Russellville, 95.
- Tienda Latina Mi Refugio, 412 Madison St. NE, Russellville, 96.
- Walmart #403 Deli, 13675 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 94.
- Willi's, 5680 Hwy. 243, Phil Campbell, 91.
- Yogi's @ Spruce Pine, 6675 Hwy. 43, Spruce Pine, 87.

Health ratings are available at www.foodscores.state.al.us and may be viewed by city or county.

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What's Happening

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EVENTS OF INTEREST • FAMILY REUNIONS • PLAYS • CHURCH GATHERINGS • EDUCATIONAL • CLUB MEETINGS

Florence Lauderdale Animal Services and local rescues are working with Franklin County to help save many abandoned animals to give them a chance at a new life. Save Our Strays needs donations called into Russellville Animal Clinic, to pay for veterinary services, spay/neuter and medical treatment for everything from heartworms to Parvo. There are also boarding expenses for the animals due to their medical treatment. No amount of donation is too small. This group has saved many cats and dogs, and they need the community's help. Call Russellville Animal Clinic and tell them you're donating to the Save Our Strays Account. Their phone number is 256-332-2254.

Food Giveaway - Groceries will be given out while supplies last! Thursday, December 30, 2021 2:00 p.m. Please stay in your vehicle and use social distancing. Russellville First United Methodist Church (Corner of Madison and Washington).

In celebration of the 120th anniversary of Red Bay First Baptist Church, the homecoming committee is seeking 120 people who will commit to reading the Bible all the way through in 2022. Please join us in reading and asking your friends, neighbors, and co-workers to join us in this endeavor. Your life will be transformed. There are day-by-day reading calendars for January in the church office. You can also find reading plans on the internet.

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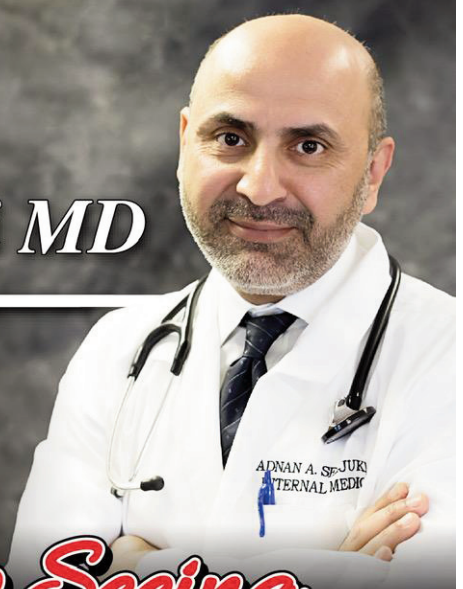
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'QUALIFYING,' from page 1

seats
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—The Alabama Republican Party State Executive Committee, the governing body of the Alabama GOP.

Locally, Franklin County races include sheriff, coroner and two seats on the Franklin County Board of Education. Those include District Two (Terry Welborn) and District Four (Shannon Oliver).

Republican candidates may qualify for the Republican ballot online at www.algop.org, or in person at ALGOP headquarters in Birmingham. Democratic candidates may qualify for the Democratic Primary online at www.aldemocrats.org.

All qualifying forms and fees must be received by 5 p.m., on Friday, January 28, 2022. Failure to do so will result in the denial of ballot access.

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Property tax payment deadline extended through January 3rd

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Franklin County residents will have a few days into the new year to pay property taxes without a penalty applying after Revenue Commissioner Strat Byars announced an extension through January 3, 2022 for payment.

With January 1st falling on a Saturday, the payment deadline was extended through Monday, January 3rd.

All payments made or postmarked by January 3rd will be considered on time, Byars said.

The announcement was made at the Franklin County Commission meeting on December 20th.

Additionally, garbage pickup will run on the normal schedule through the Christmas and New Year's holidays, but the Franklin County Landfill will be closed on Friday, December 31st and Saturday, January 1st.

At their December 20th meeting, commissioners approved a tax abatement package for a business expanding from Golden, Miss., to Franklin County.

Belgreen Coatings, LLC, owned by Chase Hicks and Wilson Thorne, will relocate in the former Parker Discount building at 13300 Highway 24 West.

Hicks said his company will keep its Golden location open, and they will be open in Franklin County with "some level of operation" by the first of the year.

Belgreen Coatings mixes paint for manufacturing facilities, and sells and distributes glues and abrasives and those associated materials.

The abatement includes all state and local noneducational property taxes and all construction related transaction taxes, except those levied for educational purposes, for a 10-year period.

Hicks expressed his appreciation to Sherye Price, the Franklin County Development Authority, Probate Judge Barry Moore and the Franklin County Commission for their support of his company's move to Franklin County.

In other agenda items, the commission:

—approved a change in residential dumpster contracts from a two-month minimum to a six-month minimum. A 60-day notice will be given to those renting residential dumpsters and the change will be effective March 1, 2022.

—approved the hiring of Leon Crittenden as a Non-Certified Property Appraiser in the Revenue Commissioner's Office, the termination of Katherine Guzman as a Tag/Title Clerk and the hiring of Heather Holden as a Tag/Title Clerk.

—approved the hiring of Hailey Brown as a permanent Office Clerk for the Franklin County Sheriff's Office, the termination of Dennis Riner as a Corrections Officer/Dispatcher, the resignation of Ricky Tharp as a Corrections Officer/Dispatcher, the hiring of Zachary Cochran as a temporary full-time Corrections Officer/Dispatcher, the retirement of Andrea Bolton as a Deputy assigned to Franklin County Courthouse Security and the temporary employment of Steven Bullion as a Deputy assigned to Franklin County Courthouse Security.

"I want to publicly thank Andrea Bolton for her dedication and service to the Franklin County Sheriff's Office and the public using the Franklin County Courthouse," Sheriff Shannon Oliver said.

—approved a resolution authorizing the settlement of the Endo Opioid Litigation. Franklin County will receive \$38,209 less attorneys and litigation fees, and funds must be used for an opioid response program.

—approved a change in the term limits of the Chairman of the Franklin County Water Service Authority from two two-year terms to three two-year terms.

—set Monday, January 10, 2022 at 6 p.m., as the time for a public hearing on the proposed revisions to Franklin County's subdivision regulations. A copy of the proposed regulations is available to the public at the Franklin County Commission Annex during regular business hours.

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Russellville Council approves 29 acre land donation

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville City Council approved the donation of approximately 29 acres of land from Russellville businessman Jody Kiel at the council's December 20th meeting.

The donated land includes seven plots located on the west side of Highway 43 North between 43 and Circle Drive, near Kelly's Kitchen restaurant. While there are several bluffs on the property, some of the plots include land suitable for development.

The council's action authorized Mayor David Grissom to execute the necessary paperwork to accept the land from Kiel.

There is no specific plan as of yet for how the land will be used.

In other agenda items, the council:

—authorized City Clerk Belinda Miller to execute paperwork to accept the Endo class action lawsuit settlement. The class action is part of national opioid litigation and represents a settlement reached between this manufacturer and the State of Alabama. The City of Russellville is expected to receive around \$42,000 less attorney's fees. The settlement funds must be used for an opioid intervention program, according to Russellville City Attorney Danny McDowell.

—authorized the mayor to enter into an agreement with the Alabama Department of Transportation for improvements on Evan Street, adjacent to Leisure Creations. This is a 100% grant for Leisure Creations expansion in the amount of \$420,100.

—approved and authorized submitting the Foster Grandparent Program grant application for the period of April 1, 2022 through March 31, 2023, and approved the appropriation of a local match of \$1806.15. The budget for the year includes \$360,355 in federal funds and \$67,101 in non-federal funds. The city's 10% appropriation is for three volunteers.

—approved the hiring of Todd Elliott as utility technician in the Russellville Street Department.

—approved the hiring of Jordan Anderson and Jordan Hammond as Russellville Police Officers.

The next regular meeting of the Russellville City Council will be January 3, 2022, with work session at 6 p.m., and meeting to follow.

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Lady Bulldogs secure win in Winston County Tournament

Staff reports

DOUBLE SPRINGS - The Belgreen Lady Bulldogs took part in the annual Winston County Christmas tournament last week alongside seven other teams over the first half of the Christmas break and came away with a win in the tournament.

Belgreen 62 Carbon Hill 38

Dacota Green had a career game as she led all scorers with 25 points in the win over Carbon Hill for the Lady Bulldogs.

Green scored four points in a first quarter where the Lady Bulldogs outscored Carbon Hill 10-5 to jump out to an early lead. Belgreen also got two points each in the quarter from Carson Hovater, Makenna Fisher, and Noelle Willingham.

The Lady Bulldogs were able to extend their lead further in the second quarter after outscoring Carbon Hill 16-12, giving Belgreen a 26-17 lead headed into halftime.

Green scored 11 points including knocking down three three-pointers while going 2-2 from the free throw line to lead the Lady Bulldogs in scoring in the quarter. Willingham also went 2-2 from the free throw line as she scored four points in the quarter.

Carbon Hill was able to keep the score relatively close through the third quarter. However, the Lady Bulldogs outscored Carbon Hill 12-11 to extend their lead by one point making it a 38-28 lead entering the final quarter.

Willingham scored six points in the quarter to pace the scoring for the Lady Bulldogs while Green added four more points to her total on the

See 'BULLDOGS,' page 13

A golden all-region team



PHOTO BY CHRISTIAN MEDINA

Conner Warhurst, pictured with football, was one of 17 total Golden Tigers to be named to the 5A region 8 all-region team. Warhurst was also named to the 5A all-state team as an honorable mention alongside teammate T.J. King.

Brady Petree
 Franklin Free Press

RUSSELLVILLE - 2021 was a very successful year of football for the Russellville Golden Tigers as they rolled to an 8-2 regular season record that included a region title and ended in a second round playoff loss to Fairview.

Reaching a rank as high as number six in the ASWA polls during the regular season, it was a historic season on both sides of the football as the Golden Tigers put up gaudy numbers both as a team and individually on the season.

Now that the season has come to an end and the full transition into basketball season has begun, individual accolades are beginning to roll in for head coach John Ritter's squad.

In total, 17 Golden Tigers were named to the 5A region 8 all-region team at the end of the year with 12 players making the first team and five named as an honorable mention.

On the offensive side of things, eight Golden Tigers made the first team.

Conner Warhurst (running back) and T.J. King

See 'TEAM,' page 14

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'BULLDOGS,' from page 11

night. BB Scott chipped in with two points in the quarter. With a ten point lead going into the final quarter, the Lady Bulldogs were able to put together an extremely impressive scoring drive in the fourth quarter to rout Carbon Hill in the win for Belgreen.

The fourth quarter is where the Lady Bulldogs were able to widen the gap and seal the deal. Three different Lady Bulldogs scored six points in the final quarter as Belgreen outpaced Carbon Hill 24-10 in the quarter to finalize the 62-38 win.

Green, Scott, and Willingham each scored six points in the fourth quarter while Makenna Fisher scored four points and Alayna Tate scored two points.

Willingham finished with 18 points on the night as Scott scored eight points in the win for Belgreen. Fisher added six points on the night while Tate and Hovater scored two points each while Lilliana Willingham went 1-2 from the free throw line to give her one point scored.

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'TEAM,' from page 11

(wide receiver) led the way on the first team as both members also were selected as honorable mentions to the 5A all-state team in addition. Arrieon "Boots" McCulloch also made the first team as part of a dynamic running back duo alongside Warhurst in the backfield. McCulloch was also selected to the team as a wide receiver. Quarterback Gabe Amick got the nod to the first team and a large portion of the offensive line for the Golden Tigers also were named to the first team as well.

Dallan Montgomery, Grayson Murray, and Grayson Thorpe, who all played vital roles as offensive linemen for a Russellville offense that put up 38 points per game, were selected as first team all-region members as well.

Of course there were individuals that were selected as members of the all-region team as both offensive and defensive players had an outstanding season for Russellville.

In 2020, the defense was the calling card for the Golden Tigers as a historically good defense opened up the season with four straight shutouts while allowing just 12.3 points per game across the season.

While the 2021 defense might not have been as dominant as the season prior, the Golden Tiger defense was still relentless. Across 12 games, both regular season and playoffs combined, the Golden Tiger defense allowed a measly 18.1 points per game including four shutouts in a five-game span.

Warhurst, who did a majority of his damage on the offensive side of the football, also had a solid senior campaign on the defensive side as a safety. Nathan Brockway, who was already one of the top tight ends in north Alabama coming into the season, made the transition to outside linebacker along with his tight end duties and therefore garnered all-region honors for both positions. Dallan Montgomery was also selected as a defensive lineman on the all-region team as well as his selection as an offensive lineman.

Gavin Slay led the linebacking group for Russellville as an outside linebacker and was named to the first team alongside Martin Thomas and Karson Hyde who both solidified the linebacking group as inside linebackers and were also selected to the all-region team.

Malachi Duncan was named to the all-region honorable mention team as a running back and an outside linebacker. Three members of the Golden Tiger defensive line core for the Golden Tigers were named as Matthew James, Junior Baltazar, and Jerrin Jackson all made the honorable mentions team. Seth Franks, an offensive lineman for Russellville, was also named to the honorable mentions team.

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LSU vs. Kansas St.	LSU	_____
Wake Forest vs. Rutgers	Wake Forest	_____
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