



PRESS RELEASE

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HOUSTON COUNTY INVESTS IN PUBLIC SAFETY WITH HELP FROM ONLINE SALES TAX REVENUE

HOUSTON COUNTY COMMISSION

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Houston County joined Alabama's 66 other counties in making significant investments in public safety during fiscal year 2026, with Alabama's Simplified Sellers Use Tax (SSUT) serving as an essential revenue source amid rising operational costs.

Across Alabama, counties spent nearly \$1 billion on law enforcement services this past year — with more than \$570 million spent on sheriff's departments, nearly \$400 million on jail operations and upwards of \$70 million on inmate medical care. Together, these services represent one of the largest responsibilities of county government and require substantial annual investment.

Established in 2015, SSUT requires eligible out-of-state sellers to collect and remit use tax on purchases made by Alabama consumers, generating revenue that is distributed to state, county and municipal governments. For Alabama counties, SSUT has become a critical source of funding for essential public services, particularly law enforcement.

"We have an outstanding Sheriff's Department, and it's our responsibility to ensure it remains properly funded," said Chairman Brandon Shoupe. "But our revenue is expected to be flat for the third year in a row, were it not for SSUT we'd be forced to confront the painful possibility of making sizable cuts because our revenue would be in decline."

Houston County is not alone. "In most counties, the revenue from SSUT is the only growing source of revenue. Without it, most county expenditures would be stagnant," said Sonny Brasfield, Executive Director of the Association of County Commissions of Alabama. "Law enforcement and the operation of the county jail is the single largest expenditure in every county in our state, so everyone has a vested interest in protecting the revenue from SSUT and ensuring that it continues to fund these essential services."

Before the creation of Alabama's unique SSUT program, Alabama relied on voluntary remittance of use taxes owed from online purchases. Enacted more than a decade ago, SSUT is recognized as one of the most efficient and effective programs in the nation for collecting use taxes.

Brandon Shoupe, Chairman

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