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Montgomery Advertiser

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2026 | MONTGOMERYADVERTISER.COM

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Civil rights warrior among Freedom Award honorees



Fred D. Gray calls for a second civil rights movement as he speaks during the second day of the Inaugural National Symposium of the Fred D. Gray Institute for Human & Civil Rights held in Montgomery on March 15, 2025.

John Beifuss
Memphis Commercial Appeal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Groundbreaking civil rights attorney Fred Gray has been named as one of four recipients of the 2026 Freedom Award from the National Civil Rights Museum. Gray, 95, is a preacher, attorney and former state legislator – one of the first two Black men elected to that office in Alabama in the 20th century. During the height of the civil rights movement, he collaborated with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and other prominent leaders, and represented King in court, as well as

Rosa Parks and Claudette Colvin, who were arrested for violating segregated bus rules in Montgomery. He was involved in numerous other significant court cases, successfully blocking redistricting efforts that would have diluted Black representation in Alabama, and enabling Black students to enroll in formerly segregated schools. In 2022, he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom. “And here’s the part that still amazes me – Mr. Gray is still practicing law,” said museum president Russ Wigginton. “He is living proof that the fight for justice does not retire.”

Described by Wigginton as “a bridge that crosses generations,” the Freedom Award is the signature event and a crucial fundraiser for the 35-year-old museum in Memphis, which was constructed around the Lorraine Motel – where King was assassinated in 1968 – to honor King’s legacy and to continue his work. According to the museum website, “This prestigious ceremony honors individuals who have made significant contributions to civil and human rights, celebrating their unwavering commitment to justice and

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Poll: Trump’s approval rating falls in Alabama

Jennifer Lindahl, Bonnie Bolden and Fernando Cervantes Jr.
Montgomery Advertiser
USA TODAY NETWORK

President Donald Trump’s approval rating among Alabama voters has slipped in recent weeks, according to the latest Civiqs polling, even as he continues to hold a positive overall rating in the state. The latest figures show 48% of Alabama voters approve of Trump’s job performance, compared with 42% who disapprove. Another 10% neither approve nor disapprove. That marks a five-point drop in approval since early August, when 53% of Alabama voters approved of Trump’s performance and 40% disapproved. The latest numbers also show a slight increase in disapproval and in the share of voters who remain neutral.

Alabama voters still give Trump a positive rating

Despite the decline, Trump continues to have a net-positive approval rating among Alabama voters. The latest figure shows a 6-point gap between approval and disapproval. That’s a narrower margin than Trump had in early August, when his 53% approval rating gave him a 13-point advantage over his 40% disapproval rating.

Trump’s approval rating nationally falls to 33%

Trump’s approval rating among Alabama voters remains considerably higher than his standing nationally. A Reuters/Ipsos poll released Aug.

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Scientists use AI to speed up physics research

Gary Cosby Jr.
Tuscaloosa News
USA TODAY NETWORK

Science is about to get an upgrade, thanks to two physicists at the University of Alabama. In Tuscaloosa, Konstantin Matchev and Sergei Gleyzer are leading a project to develop an artificial intelligence tool that will help process the massive amounts of data generated by the Large Hadron Collider at CERN. The collider is on the border between France and Switzerland. The English language translation of the acronym means European Council for Nuclear Research. The facility, a 27-kilometer-long underground particle accelerator, creates a petabyte of information for every second of operation. That is where the AI tool being developed at the Uni-

versity of Alabama will come into play. “Typically, every analysis can involve large groups and subgroups. We have a collaboration of 5,000 scientists. And at any given time, we’re working on many of these in parallel. Historically, this involves a lot of code, a lot of systems and a lot of things that kind of live in different places,” said Gleyzer, professor of physics and astronomy and chief science officer of the University of Alabama High Performance Computing and Data Center. “With the advent of some of these AI tools, there’s now a possibility for us to orchestrate some of these to perform some of these tasks autonomously,” he said. The Large Hadron Collider is currently down for a maintenance phase.

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University of Alabama physics professor Sergei Gleyzer stands in front of the Large Hadron Collider at CERN. The device is used to accelerate and collide particles to help scientists better understand how the universe works.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY SERGEI GLEYZER

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