

# Solutionism in Orange Beach

1000 words

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## **Solutionism in Orange Beach**

Solutionists believe their way is the only way, fighting against the tide of possibilities, reasoning they have thought the problem through, analyzed all the facts, and concluded their vision is completely correct.

Orange Beach Mayor Tony Kennon is a solutionist. He espouses the fix to the traffic problem in Orange Beach is more roads and bridges to move the tourists, ignoring the evidence that unbridled development on the beach road caused the problem, and it happened over the last ten years on his watch.

We are past the point of limiting development, but not past the point of asking ourselves if this government is governed by council's addiction to the wealth from tourism, or if the notion of maintaining our small town quality of life means more to us than supporting council's devotion to increasing the city's tax yield on revenues. The unfolding rests with voting for council seats in 2020, possibly giving birth to a group of neomillennial politicians.

Solutionism is singularly focused on the distillation of one person's ideas, letting them implement every policy of government in a democracy. This requires the collective surrender of all the levers of power, believing the strong individual understands the big picture better than anyone else in the community. The mayor and council are not co-equal branches of government as defined by the founders.

Mayor Kennon is the person we elected to lead us through the very difficult recession of 2008, recovering from the post-Ivan devastation of 2005. In 2018 our town sits with cash reserves of more than \$40 million, according to documents on the city's web site (<https://orangebeachal.gov/departments/finance-department/financial-reports>).

This is commendable, and I am thankful for the city's fiscal solvency, providing job security for municipal employees.

Perhaps it is time to plan for a change away from solutionism. The Alabama Constitution Section 2 provides guidance, "That all political power is inherent in the people, and all free governments are founded on their authority, and instituted for their benefit; and that, therefore, they have at all times an inalienable and indefeasible right to change their form of government in such manner as they may deem expedient," according to a report on Justia (<https://law.justia.com/constitution/alabama/CA-245533.html>).

Districting Council Seats is one alternative, forcing each council member to support the concerns of their constituents, not the vision of the strong mayor ([https://velvetillusion.com/2015\\_vi/pdfs/essays/2019/01\\_16\\_2019\\_council\\_districting\\_in\\_orange\\_beach.pdf](https://velvetillusion.com/2015_vi/pdfs/essays/2019/01_16_2019_council_districting_in_orange_beach.pdf)).

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Mayor Tony Kennon went on a lobbying tour in January of this year, visiting Rotary Clubs and Chambers across the state, arguing for a transportation solution through the State Park (Powerline Road), even though the BP Agreement prohibited such an environmentally destructive project for two decades.

"A federal lawsuit that was settled last year, and which enabled a new beachside conference center and hotel complex to move forward, bluntly declares that no north-south connecting road [Powerline Road] can be built through a popular coastal Alabama state park for the next 20 years," according to a report by John Sharp at al.com (<https://www.al.com/news/beaches/2018/11/mayor-pitches-north-south-beach-road-but-federal-settlement-may-prevent-it.html>).

The solutionist in Kennon rails against this part of the settlement.

According to a report by John Mullen in the Lagniappe (<https://lagniappemobile.com/orange-beach-mayors-tour-seeks-infrastructure-help/>), "I really want to start educating these folks to just how simple the fix is, and that is the road down Powerline Road [north-south corridor] to the beach," Kennon said. "It could solve so many of our traffic problems during the summer. I'm going to start beating that drum now all over the state as we need help getting that done."

Kennon continues, "These are Alabama's beaches, we're the stewards of them and you guys need to help us build the infrastructure and maintain the infrastructure that we need to move all these tourists. You're not doing Orange Beach a favor by helping us out, you're doing the state of Alabama a service because there's so much money generated down here and a good bit of it goes to Montgomery. Orange Beach generates about 15 percent of all lodging tax in the state. This is significant."

Solutionism reflected in Mayor Tony Kennon's words speaks volumes. This key issue neglects to mention who will get the bill for breaking the BP Agreement, building a road across the state park.

Alabama should not entertain paying for nonsense in Orange Beach, including the proposed Flyover Bridge west of the Foley Beach Express (<http://altoday.com/archives/27483-rauf-bolden-bridge2nowhere-in-orange-beach>). Confiscating properties through eminent domain to build this bridge rails against conservative values. Nothing says socialism quite like seizing private lands.

Orange Beach boasts overflowing coffers, enthusiastically campaigning against preserving the environmental integrity of the state park, but still grabbing their portion of the BP settlement, "We were very pleased with \$40 million, with \$275 million on the table, I've seen knifing's and shootings for a whole lot less but it was fairly distributed and very equitable," Kennon said, according to a report on Fox10 News ([https://www.fox10tv.com/news/canal-road-widening-part-of-million-in-restore-act-funding/article\\_972aeb86-25de-11e9-8f7a-eb40d471e8d9.html](https://www.fox10tv.com/news/canal-road-widening-part-of-million-in-restore-act-funding/article_972aeb86-25de-11e9-8f7a-eb40d471e8d9.html)).

Solutionism is driving the conversation in Orange Beach. We see diametrically opposing forces at work here, simultaneously wanting to kill the BP Settlement, proposing a road across the state park, and concurrently blessing the BP Settlement monies the city has yet to receive.

Perhaps it is time to reflect.

ENDS.

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