



Engineer- Elect

Engineers who also hold state and local public office are rare, but they bring a knack for problem solving to government

By Bob Woods

Engineers are known for providing imaginative solutions to pressing social challenges, which allow Americans to drink clean water, enjoy new technologies and travel safely and efficiently. Elected officeholders in state and local government also seek meaningful answers to quality of life issues faced by their constituents. But in the instances when engineers can utilize their technical proficiency while fulfilling responsibilities as an elected officeholder, the benefit to the public is magnified. In this special *Engineering Inc.* report, a quartet of current and former state and local officeholders, who are also engineers, share their problem-solving experiences in government.>>

Pathway to Public Service

Charles Busby is CEO and president of Orion Engineering in Mississippi and also a freshman legislator in the state's House of Representatives. He represents the nearly 24,000 constituents of District 111, an industrial region in the state's southeast corner that includes his hometown of Pascagoula. The 51-year-old Busby has long been civically active, from serving as sophomore class president to Little League coach to member of the local planning commission. "It's important that you demonstrate to the voters, prior to running for office, that you're willing to give of yourself for the good of the public," he says.

In 2011, a group of local citizens recruited Busby to seek his first elected office. After passing muster with GOP leaders in Jackson, the state capital, "I felt this tremendous pressure to have answers for all the woes that plagued Mississippi, and I simply didn't have those answers," he says. He finally decided that the only way to find them was to run. "I needed to ask the right questions, and I was comfortable that I could do that." In the election, he nipped the incumbent—a lawyer—by 35 votes.