

# Southern Skin Diver Supply



Founded 1953  
The Oldest in the South

Elizabeth Brown  
Director of Alabama State Historical Commission  
468 S. Perry St.  
Montgomery, AL 36130

August 26, 1999

Dear Ms. Brown:

I am writing you concerning the new bill passed during the last legislative session. I have spoken to you and Greg Reinhardt several times over the phone.

I am a collector of Civil War relics. I am also a SCUBA diver for the last 35 years. In addition, I am the president of Southern Skin Diver Supply in Birmingham, the oldest dive store in the South. I am probably the top collector of underwater Civil War relics in Alabama and have more experience in preserving these relics than any other person or museum in the state. I do work for museums across the United States, including the Atlanta History Center, which has the largest collection of Civil War relics.

What I'm trying to say is I'm very knowledgeable and I should have been consulted so I could speak for myself and other collectors and divers. As you know, there was no advanced notice given to collectors, divers or dealers of metal detectors and SCUBA equipment regarding a bill such as this. I don't think this was fair at all. This whole bill is wrong and I think it will not pass legal tests as it is written.

I realize that when regulations are written, the state, in its generosity, can grant permits to persons in the state. However, I don't think the state has the right to own or claim to own anything that never belonged to them. Just because somebody threw a bottle into the Coosa River 70 years ago and a person hunting mussels finds it and wants it, doesn't mean it belongs to the state.

The State Historical Commission have no possible claim on all the waters in the state any more than they do on all the air in the state. The state government and its employees work for the citizens. The citizens do not work for the state, nor are they owned by the state.

As you can tell, I'm quite irritated by this bill and I want it repealed. From this point on, I want to be informed and involved in any actions taken regarding this bill. I want the people who are affected by it to be able to provide input. I intend to ensure that all of us are made aware of what is happening.

Please schedule me in on any future meetings concerning this bill. I am more than willing to drive to Montgomery.

Thank you for reading this and for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Phillips", written over a white background.

Steve Phillips

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