By Mike Randle, Editor and Publisher

STATE	TOTAL DEALS	TOTAL POINT	*PPM	*PPM RANK
ALABAMA	**32**	**200**	**43.4**	**7TH**

This state's automotive and aerospace industries are carrying it in the economic recovery of the Great Recession. Mercedes-Benz, Hyundai, Honda and Toyota have all announced significant expansions in the last year. Mobile has weighed in with a huge expansion at Austal's shipyard, but white collar jobs in Birmingham, the state's largest metro, are non-existent. Rural areas are not seeing much of anything right now except for automotive related deals. That Hyundai Heavy project in Montgomery is special.

ARKANSAS	**12**	**65**	**23.1**	**13TH**

Arkansas was but one of only four Southern states that saw its points drop from the year before. The wind energy sector has done well here, but there hasn't been a major announcement from that cluster in a while. Arkansas' business-friendly atmosphere still exists as it has for years, though, and you can't find a state with a lower unemployment rate other than Oklahoma's in the South. What that means is, the companies that are there are very happy. Little Rock carried the state with 7 of its 12 "100" deals.

FLORIDA	**30**	**210**	**11.6**	**17TH**

The 2011 SB&D 100 shows that this state continues to struggle evidenced by its last place PPM score (again). But, so far in 2011 we have seen some improvement, though it is slow to emerge. New governor Rick Scott is skirting a revolution in The Sunshine State and it is too early to know if that is a good or bad thing. What needs to help the South's second-largest state is for the financial services industry to get back on its feet as well as other sectors in the services industry, which they are. A real estate rebound of any measure would also help Florida.

GEORGIA	**38**	**280**	**29.9**	**10TH**

Georgia, along with Florida and North Carolina, was beaten up worse than any state in the South in the Great Recession. But like those two states and others, it's getting better in the Peach State. What we would like to see is a year when Georgia's metros do well in the same year as the state's rural areas. Right now, the metros are improving but rural areas in Georgia are suffering more than in any other Southern state. In the winter quarter, 29 rural Georgia counties had double-digit unemployment, which led all states in the South.

KANSAS	**23**	**165**	**59.6**	**2ND**

This is the last year we will be covering Kansas as we align the Southern states covered on www.RandleReport.com with SB&Ds. RandleReport.com was launched in November of last year and is now a large part of the SB&D family. And wouldn't you know it, the last year we cover Kansas is their best year ever, placing 2nd in PPM, earning the state an "Honorable Mention." The retention and expansion of Hawker Beechcraft in Wichita was huge. That company flirted with relocating to Louisiana.

KENTUCKY	**27**	**170**	**40.4**	**9TH**

This state has quietly emerged from the recession and the automotive industry –both domestic and foreign –is driving Kentucky's economy right now. With GM, Ford and Toyota having major assembly plants in the Bluegrass State, deals are flying here. Ford's $400 million, 1,800-employee expansion is as important a deal as Kentucky has ever turned. Also in 2010, economic development officials landed a nice mix of urban and rural projects.

LOUISIANA	**71**	**495**	**115.4**	**1ST**

Other than for three months, every metro in Louisiana posted an unemployment rate below the national average during The Great Recession. That's 130 out of 133 months. Now that we are two years removed from that downturn, this state's big projects have flown off the charts. Oil, gas and chemical industry deals drove Louisiana's PPM ranking to the best ever in SB&D 100 history, earning Louisiana its fourth "State of the Year" in five years. New Orleans earned "Major Market of the Year" and Lake Charles won "Mid Market of the Year." It can't get any better.

MARYLAND	**34**	**245**	**43.6**	**6TH**

Maryland is one of three border states that we will not cover next year in this report as we match up states covered on RandleReport.com with those covered by SB&D. And like Kansas, Maryland performed very well in its last SB&D 100. The Baltimore side of the D.C. region lit up the charts with the best performance we have seen from a mega-market in years. Health care and the life sciences are really taking charge in the Baltimore region like no other place in the South.

MISSISSIPPI	**14**	**120**	**41.2**	**8TH**

In 2010, Mississippi may have recovered more than any other state after a horrible 2010 when it chalked up but 45 points in the "100." There were some significant deals, particularly from the clean tech sector. In fact, for small states in the South, Mississippi may have landed more high profile projects than any other Southern state last year except for Louisiana. But it is choppy in Mississippi. Unlike New Orleans, which has experienced a monumental comeback since Katrina, Gulfport-Biloxi hasn't been the same since that disaster happened.

STATE	TOTAL DEALS	TOTAL POINT	*PPM	*PPM RANK
MISSOURI	**11**	**80**	**13.6**	**16TH**

Unlike Kansas and Maryland, this border state posted a poor performance in its last SB&D 100 as we drop Missouri from our coverage next year. Eleven big projects and a next to last PPM score just isn't going to cut it. What has happened to the Kansas City, Mo. side of that market and St. Louis? There were only three big projects that came out of those two metros. Kansas City had a solid year, but that came from the Kansas side of that metro. Overall, Missouri's points were cut in half from last year in the second best "100" in 18 years. Not good.

NORTH CAROLINA	**70**	**460**	**51.9**	**3RD**

The Tar Heel State saw one of the biggest comebacks in SB&D 100 history raising its point total to 460 after a miserable 150 point performance last year. This is exactly what the state did as it emerged from the last recession of 2001-2002 when it went from 140 points to 460 in one year, proving that it is feast or famine in N.C. based on national economic trends. That needs to change. But the financial services sector is improving, which helps Charlotte and the Triad and manufacturing deals are flying all over the state. Overall, a great year.

OKLAHOMA	**8**	**55**	**15.3**	**15TH**

Oklahoma always perplexes us in that it usually posts one of the lowest scores in the SB&D 100 ranking –the ranking is based on new and expanded projects –but its unemployment rate is always lower than any other Southern state. Oklahoma City has the lowest unemployment rate of any major U.S. metro. The state only has three recognized metros by the Census Bureau and not a one had an unemployment rate higher than the national rate in each of the 19 months of the Great Recession. No Southern state can claim that. This is a retention state and a good one.

SOUTH CAROLINA	**31**	**205**	**47.4**	**5TH**

Like most of the states in the South, South Carolina came back strong in 2010 with an outstanding year, placing fifth in the all-important PPM ranking. There were some outstanding projects throughout the state, most notably in the Upstate, in and around Columbia and in Aiken. The surge in manufacturing in the South has greatly assisted North and South Carolina this year. Just a really solid year for The Palmetto State following the 2010 "100" where it landed the "Project of the Year" when Boeing decided to put its new 787 plant in Charleston.

TENNESSEE	**45**	**300**	**49.6**	**4TH**

This state shared "State of the Year" honors with Louisiana in the 2009 and 2010 SB&D 100s. Tennessee had another stout year, although its points did drop from 345 to 300. But, it turned exactly the same number of projects (45) as it did last year, which simply means there were just a handful that were smaller in announced investment or employment. Like Mississippi, Tennessee is benefitting from the clean tech sector in a big way. Winning "State of the Year" in 2009 and 2010 and earning an "Honorable Mention" this year is hard to beat.

TEXAS	**96**	**665**	**28.2**	**11TH**

Texas has such a large population that it suffers some years in our annual SB&D 100 because of our per capita criteria even though it has attracted more jobs and projects in every SB&D 100 but one since 1992. Texas' economy has not only been the best in the South in the last 10 years, its economy has outshined all states nationwide. Texas added 733,000 net new jobs in the last 10 years. No other state added more than 100,000. Austin, Houston, San Antonio and Dallas-Fort Worth are the South's most consistent performers each year.

VIRGINIA	**33**	**190**	**24.8**	**12TH**

Other than the aforementioned Texas markets, no market in the South has a hotter economy than northern Virginia right now. Richmond is recovering and it remains to be seen how Hampton Roads fares if there is a significant cut in defense spending in the next few years. The problem with Virginia is always how well its rural areas do and right now they are still hurting. But to me, there is no rural area in the South more appealing than Southside and Southwest Virginia. Overall, the South's huge surge in 2010 didn't find Virginia.

WEST VIRGINIA	**5**	**40**	**21.9**	**14TH**

Like Louisiana and Oklahoma, West Virginia's three metros only saw four months out of 57 possible months with unemployment rates higher than the national rate during the recession of December 2007 to June 2009. Regardless, West Virginia missed out on the first significant surge in major projects in the South in years. Its points dropped from 70 to 40 this year, but Macy's $150 million, 1,900-employee e-commerce fulfillment center project is one of the best we've seen in that state in quite some time.

*** PPM = Points per million residents. All points are earned from projects of 200 jobs or more and/or $30 million or more in investment.**