

FINE GEDDIE

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

THE FINE GEDDIE REPORT 2017 REGULAR SESSION · WEEK TEN APRIL 28, 2017

ROY MOORE TO SEEK U.S. SENATE SEAT; BATTLE IN FOR GOVERNOR'S RACE

This week, former Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore announced he will run for the U.S. Senate seat previously held by former Senator Jeff Sessions. This came as no surprise. Last summer, Moore was suspended from his position as Chief Justice after he sent a memo to state probate judges encouraging them not to issue marriage certificates to same-sex couples. His removal was affirmed by the Supreme Court last week. He was previously removed from the same position in 2003 after he refused to follow a federal court order to remove a monument dedicated to the Ten Commandments that he had placed in the rotunda of the Alabama Judicial Building. He will be a formidable candidate.

Last week, Gov. Ivey announced that a special election will be held for the U.S. Senate seat. Former Alabama Attorney General Luther Strange was appointed to the position by Gov. Bentley in February. The party primaries will be held on August 15, 2017 and, if necessary, a runoff will be held September 26. The General Election will be December 12. The candidate filing deadline for the race is May 17.

Randy Brinson, a medical doctor from Elmore County and president of the Christian Coalition of Alabama, is also running for the seat. Senator Luther Strange and State Rep. Ed Henry (R-Hartselle) have declared their candidacies. President Pro-Tem Del Marsh (R—Anniston), who is now the second-ranking Republican in state government, is expected to announce his candidacy as well. Several other contenders are considering throwing their hats into the ring.

Tommy Battle, the current Mayor of Huntsville, announced that he will run for Governor in the 2018 Election Cycle.

THIS WEEK IN THE HOUSE

The House met late into the night on Tuesday. Among the bills approved that day were: HB315 by Rep. Johnson (R—Moulton) to exempt certain midwives from licensure by the Alabama Nursing Board and Board of Medical Examiners; HB234 by Rep. Faulkner (R—Birmingham) to require a person contesting the sale of an abandoned motor vehicle to file notice in circuit court; and HB355 by Rep. Coleman (D—Birmingham), related to the banking industry, to authorize certain savings promotion contests and distinguish such contests from unconstitutional gambling or lottery activity.

On Thursday, productivity in the House came to a halt by a Democratic-caucus led filibuster on legislation that would prohibit the removal or relocation of historical monuments that are 50-years old or older. Debate over SB60 by Sen. Allen (R—Tuscaloosa) has sparked concern that it is intended to protect Confederate monuments. After several hours, the bill was approved as well

as HB387 by Rep. Chesteen (R—Geneva) related to tax credits for irrigation projects.

THIS WEEK IN THE SENATE

The Senate has been working well together. This week, many bills were approved including the following: SB280 by Sen. Waggoner (R—Birmingham) to authorize automated parking enforcement, as amended to address the concerns of the rental car industry; HB94 by Rep. Rich (R—Albertville) an insurance industry bill to amend the Risk Based Capital Act; SB314 by Sen. Brewbaker (R—Montgomery) to authorize a High Performance Principals Program that would institute salary supplement incentives for public K-12 principals based on student achievement; and HB66 by Rep. Hanes (R—Huntsville) related to permits for certain fire protection sprinkler systems and certain data collected by the State Fire Marshall.

The Senate also approved HB333 by Rep. Chesteen (R—Geneva) to streamline collection of revenue for vehicles that run on compressed or liquefied natural gas. The bill will lift a moratorium on the collection of such revenue that has been in place since 2014 and is prompted by the increasing use of compressed and liquefied natural gas. Revenue will go to the Alabama Road and Bridge Fund.

SB380 by Sen. Pittman (R—Fairhope), which would authorize automated collection of toll fees, was carried over to the call of the chair. Sen. Pittman’s comments on the floor indicated that the bill is geared toward ongoing development projects in Baldwin County.

AUTONOMOUS VEHICLE POLICY DISCUSSION UPDATE

A bill to authorize municipalities to issue licenses for the testing of autonomous vehicles was defeated in the Senate Transportation and Energy Committee this week. SB379 by Sen. Holtzclaw (R—Huntsville) was voted down on Thursday after a public hearing had been held on the bill the day before. Sen. Holtzclaw claimed he had been encouraged to pursue the legislation by the Huntsville Chamber of Commerce that would give software engineers in his area the ability to work on autonomous vehicle technology.

Separately, on Wednesday of this week a joint legislative task force which was created pursuant to a resolution approved earlier in the legislative session, met to consider autonomous vehicle policies and discuss next steps. The Council for State Governments is working with the task force as a resource in the discussion. Discussion in Thursday’s committee meeting revealed that while many agree that state lawmakers must engage to development policies providing for testing and eventual usage of autonomous vehicles, there are differing views on how to approach the issue.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

The Senate Finance and Taxation Committee on the General Fund approved SB373 by Sen. Pittman (R—Fairhope) this week. The legislation would amend and extend authorization of the tax credits under the Alabama Jobs Act, passed in 2015, to exempt certain projects from the \$850 million aggregate balance cap on incentives. The current law provides for such incentives until December 2019, but the bill would extend that authorization to 2023. Additionally, the bill would

allow the Department of Commerce to offer tax incentives in an amount beyond the \$850 million cap when the projects would employ (and create jobs for) at least 500 workers and includes a capital investment by the recipient of \$100 million or more.

Next week, SB377 by Sen. Marsh to repeal the Alabama New Markets Development Act, is expected to be on the agenda for the Senate Finance and Taxation Committee on the Education Trust Fund. Additionally, a companion bill, HB570 by Rep. Williams (R—Huntsville) was filed this week and has been assigned to the House Ways and Means Committee on the Education Trust Fund.

The House and Senate will reconvene on Tuesday, May 2 for a three-day week. There are 9 meeting days remaining in the 2017 Regular Session.