

FINE GEDDIE

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

THE FINE GEDDIE REPORT 2019 REGULAR SESSION · WEEK THREE MARCH 22, 2019

COMMON CORE: SENATE VOTES TO REPEAL EDUCATION STANDARDS

The Alabama Senate closed the first full week of the 2019 Regular Session on a loud note, approving a bill to repeal the state's **Common Core standards** on a 23-7 vote divided along party lines. The amended version of SB119 by Senate President Pro Tempore Del Marsh (R—Anniston) would require development of new standards for K-12 schools in the next three years. Sen. Marsh said the change was needed to improve poor educational outcomes in the state, and the fast-moving legislation has been received well by outspoken conservatives, who have criticized GOP legislators for supporting the fuel tax increase (known as Rebuild Alabama) enacted last week. But many in the state's business community have been vocal in their support of Common Core, which was developed by the National Governors Association and heightened curriculum standards in Alabama.

If Sen. Marsh's Common Core proposal hinted that he might be trying to cure criticism about the gas tax increase from the GOP's far-right, he went a step further with SB22, which would create a mechanism for taxpayers to donate part of their state income tax refund to **We Build the Wall, Inc.** The proposal won approval in the Senate this week and is poised for consideration in a House committee after the recess. A House companion version of the bill has not advanced.

GOVERNOR IVEY SUBMITS BUDGET PROPOSALS TO LEGISLATURE

This week Governor Kay Ivey released her **budget recommendations**, mirroring the priorities she outlined in the State of the State Address on March 5. Alabama is one of the few states with separate operating budgets, and positive revenue forecasts mean more dollars to be appropriated for fiscal year 2020. The proposed Education Trust Fund budget totals \$7.1 billion, the largest in state history. Governor Ivey applied the growth primarily to a 4 percent pay raise for teachers, continued expansion for pre-K and increased funding for four-year colleges. In the \$2.1 billion General Fund budget, Governor Ivey's recommendations included a 2 percent pay raise for state employees, hiring 500 additional correctional officers, boosting salaries across-the-board for prison security staff and hiring 50 more state troopers. Legislators will begin their appropriations work in earnest after the recess.

ALABAMIANS COULD DECIDE STATE LOTTERY NEXT YEAR

State voters could get another chance to decide the **lottery** question with the two-bill package (SB116 and SB130) introduced this week by Sen. Jim McClendon (R—Springville). Revenue would be evenly split between the state's two main operating budgets, and the bills also provide for some video lottery terminals. Alabama is one of the few states without a lottery, and 20 years have passed since the last time the question was put to voters. The Poarch Band of Creek Indians, which operates four gaming establishments in Alabama among its varied business enterprises, has voiced concerns about the proposal as introduced.

OTHER ISSUES TO WATCH

- Existing law sets no timeframe for a sheriff to issue or reinstate an individual's **pistol permit** after a successful appeal. As amended in committee this week, HB17 by Rep. Connie Rowe (R—Jasper) would require a sheriff to issue or reinstate a pistol permit within five business days of receiving the district court order. Rep. Rowe is a former police chief.
- Cracking down on rampant **telephone solicitations** has proven a popular goal, and this week a Senate committee narrowed SB7 sponsored by Sen. Tim Melson (R—Florence). Among the changes, the amendment removes the connection to the Deceptive Trade Practices Act. Three other proposals on this issue made no forward progress this week, and Sen. Andrew Jones (R—Centre) offered his approach with the introduction of SB95.
- All four budget committee chairs – two from each chamber – would serve on the **Contract Review Permanent Legislative Oversight Committee** under a clarifying measure, SB80 by Sen. Arthur Orr (R—Decatur), approved in committee this week. An identical bill has also been introduced in the House.
- With this week's introduction of HB243 by Rep. Mike Ball (R—Madison), lawmakers got a first look at a comprehensive **medical marijuana** measure that would establish a commission to regulate, administer and enforce a medical cannabis program in the state.
- **Alternative nicotine products** would be subject to comprehensive regulation under HB41 sponsored by Rep. Shane Stringer (R—Citronelle).
- With a bipartisan, 26-0 vote, the Senate approved putting an end to **marriage licenses** in the state. Sen. Greg Albritton (R—Range) has been working on SB69 for several years to resolve a lingering issue with same-sex marriage in some jurisdictions.
- Striking a blow against **distracted driving**, a House committee approved HB6 sponsored by Rep. Allen Farley (R—McCalla) to prohibit drivers

from holding stand-alone electronic devices. The committee added a technical amendment and another amendment to name the act.

STATE AGENCIES UNDER LEGISLATIVE REVIEW

Pursuant to the state's sunset law, legislators scrutinize state agencies on a rotating basis to determine if each agency should continue to operate and how soon it should be reviewed again. Among other agencies, sunset reviews of the following agencies advanced in the House this week:

- Alabama State Board of Pharmacy
- Athlete Agents Commission
- Athletic Commission
- Board of Bar Examiners
- Board of Dental Examiners
- Historical Commission
- Onsite Wastewater Board
- Security Regulatory Board
- State Licensing Board for General Contractors

The House and Senate are taking a spring break recess next week, and both chambers will reconvene on Tuesday, April 2. There are 26 meeting days remaining in the 2019 Regular Session.