

Legislative UPDATE

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Current News About Legislative Issues Affecting The University of Alabama System

DECISIVE ACTION PREVENTS PRORATION

With more than 40 states battling budget shortfalls, Alabama emerged as a winner last month when Governor Siegelman and the Alabama Legislature stood firm in their support of a new revenue measure. In an unprecedented election-year action, state officials passed a tax package that will bridge the \$161 million current year shortfall in the Education Trust Fund, thereby preventing proration.

With the June 4 primaries less than six months away, elected leaders fearlessly broke with national counterparts during the special session that concluded just before Christmas. As candidates across the country are urged to take the “no new tax” pledge, the Governor and the Alabama Legislature bucked the trend and acted aggressively to prevent cuts to the current year K-12 and Higher Ed budgets.

The Higher Ed community owes a debt of thanks to Governor Siegelman, Lt. Governor Steve Windom, House Speaker Seth Hammett, Senate President pro tem Lowell Barron and leadership in both Legislative chambers for crafting a bipartisan solution to the education budget shortfall. Senate Majority Leader Tom Butler, Representatives Tim Parker and John Rogers led efforts in the Legislature, demonstrating unswerving support for their UA System campus constituents.

“We saw some powerfully strong profiles in courage by our state leadership,” UA System Chancellor Mack Portera said. “Especially at a time when three-fourths of the states in this country are faced with serious budget problems, Alabama’s leaders took a brave and necessary stand. They deserve special thanks for their support of education.”

CHANCELLOR PORTERA SETS LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

UA System Chancellor Mack Portera, who assumed his duties on January 1, is meeting with campus groups and legislative leadership to deliver his message about the critical need for improved funding. Portera, who is well known throughout the state, says competitive faculty salaries must be a top priority in Montgomery. Citing the multi-billion-dollar impact that UA, UAB and UAH have on Alabama’s economy, he is telling audiences that we must do everything possible to raise salaries past the mid-point of the SREB averages.

Portera is recognized as an effective and experienced team leader whose 26 years of Higher Education experience in Alabama will enable him to move decisively in the funding arena. For more information on Chancellor Portera, visit The University of Alabama System web site: www.uasystem.ua.edu

’02 BUDGETS EXPECTED IN 30-60 DAYS

State fiscal officers are delaying debate on FY 02-03 budget proposals until they get a better handle on fourth-quarter 2001 sales tax receipts. The regular session of the Alabama Legislature opened last week without the traditional unveiling of the Governor’s budget plan, which is expected sometime in the next 30-60 days. Delaying release of state budgets until February or March will enable Finance Director Henry Mabry and his staff to use the most current holiday sales figures in projecting receipts for the Education Trust Fund.

HIGHER ED DAY IS FEBRUARY 21

Mark your calendars for Thursday, February 21, when the Higher Education Partnership hopes to bring another record crowd to Montgomery for Higher Ed Day. This annual event has become a pivotal opportunity for Alabama's public colleges and universities, where elected officials get a first-hand perspective on the growing strength of the Higher Ed lobby. Last year's crowd, estimated at more than 3,500 faculty, staff, students and alumni, is expected to be surpassed in size and strength in 2002 as attention focuses on upcoming elections.

The Business Council of Alabama will again play an important role in Higher Ed Day, hosting Alabama Jobs 2002. The job fair will give college and university students a chance to meet and interview with representatives of industry and business from throughout the state.

Watch future issues of *The Legislative Update* for details on the February 21 schedule. You can also visit the Higher Education Partnership website (www.higheredpartners.org) or call 334-832-9911. The Partnership's advocacy role will be especially valuable during this election year as all of Higher Education must stand together. For a membership form: www.ua.edu/advancement/government/govrel.html

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