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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA SYSTEM

# *Legislative* UPDATE

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*Current News About Legislative Issues Affecting The University of Alabama System*

## **ALABAMA SENATE STANDS UP FOR HIGHER EDUCATION**

Monday night in Montgomery Alabama Senators sent a strong message that ALL levels of education are important to our state. By failing to pass the budget bill on the floor during waning hours of the regular session, they were simply unwilling to support the largest higher education budget cut in the entire country.

Rather than saddle our 4-year institutions with a massive funding reduction, the Senate, in an intense 14-hour filibuster, killed the education budget and ended the legislative session.

The next step is for Governor Riley to call a special session to adopt an education budget. Speculation in the State House indicates that could occur within the next two weeks. Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle are urging the Governor to bring everyone together before the special session so as not to waste a day or a dollar of the taxpayers' money.

## **HOW WE MEASURE UP IN THE SOUTHEAST**

Faced with a proposed budget that would have cut Higher Ed by 11.2%, university leaders argued forcefully that Alabama cannot afford to take a step backward while other Southeastern states are growing their investment in universities or minimizing effects of the national economic downturn.

Full-page ads in state newspapers on Sunday outlined the facts about current education budget comparisons in our region:

**Alabama: proposed 11.2% cut**  
Tennessee: 5% cut  
Kentucky: 3% cut  
South Carolina: 2.2% cut  
Arkansas: 0.5% cut  
Mississippi: level funding  
Louisiana: 5.62% increase  
Georgia: 10.3% increase

## **ACTIVITY IN THE SENATE**

Like all of public education in Alabama, universities are prepared to shoulder our full responsibilities by managing resources wisely during these difficult financial times. Higher Ed supporters in the Senate crafted an amendment that would have added less than one half of 1% to the appropriation **without** reducing funding to K-12 or 2-year colleges by one red cent!

Despite all-out efforts by a strong contingent of Senators, the measure failed to reach the floor. Late Monday evening Senate leaders called for a cloture vote to force a vote on a version of the budget that

**did not include** the additional amount for Higher Ed. The Senate defeated the cloture motion on a 17-14 vote with 4 not voting (18 votes are required to invoke cloture).

**Voting in support of Higher Ed:** Senators Beason, Bishop, Dixon, Erwin, French, Glover, Holley, Marsh, Means, Pittman, Preuitt, Singleton, Smith, and Waggoner.

**Not voting** (equivalent to voting in support of Higher Ed): Senators Brooks, Butler, Orr and Penn.

**Voting AGAINST Higher Ed:** Senators Barron, Bedford, Benefield, Coleman, Denton, Figures, Griffith, Lindsey, Ted Little, Zeb Little, McClain, Mitchell, Mitchem, Poole, Ross, Sanders, and Smitherman.

Senators who stood tall for our universities deserve a huge vote of thanks for their staunch position.  
**Please take time now to thank them personally for their support!**

To obtain a mailing address, email address or telephone number for Senators, log on to:  
[http://www.legislature.state.al.us/senate/senators/senateroster\\_alpha.html](http://www.legislature.state.al.us/senate/senators/senateroster_alpha.html)

To find your Senator or Representative, log on to:  
<http://www.legislature.state.al.us/misc/zipsearch.html>

## **NEXT IMPORTANT STEPS**

The time has come to stop pointing fingers and placing blame. We need to sit down together in a spirit of cooperation to move Alabama forward – building the economy, creating new jobs and giving people the right tools for success. Now is the time to signal our competitors around the nation and throughout the world that Higher Ed matters to all of us who live and work in this great state.

Please contact Governor Riley as well as your Senators and Representatives to let them know we are prepared to take our pro rata share of the budget cuts but we cannot take a step backwards and jeopardize the state's economic growth and the future of our children! Your calls, emails and letters make a huge difference. **(The number to the Governor's Office is 334-242-7100.)**

We look forward to a prompt resolution to the education budget stalemate. Thank you for your efforts throughout the session – and please continue to make your voices heard!

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

**If you have questions or need additional information, please contact members of the UA System Government Relations Team:**

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