

Legislative UPDATE

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Current News About Legislative Issues Affecting The University of Alabama System

2005 SESSION OPENS ON A PROMISING NOTE

The 2005 session of the Alabama Legislature kicked off Tuesday night on a positive note for education in our state. Because of robust sales tax and income tax collections over the past year, the Education Trust Fund is in better shape than it has been for many years. In his State of the State address, Governor Riley noted that his budget proposal contained everything the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (and the Council of College and University Presidents) requested for our institutions. He proposed funding for higher education institutions that would:

- cover the increased cost to our campuses of the Teachers Retirement System (TRS) match
- cover the increased cost of health insurance premiums for our retirees (PEEHIP)
- provide sufficient funding for a 4% compensation increase pool

The Governor's budget also includes a 4% increase for K-12 teachers. The Higher Education community is working hard to ensure that we get an increase equal to that of K-12 if they are funded higher than 4%.

We need to thank Governor Riley for including Higher Education's full request in his budget. Please take a minute to write or email a brief thank you to the Governor right away. His mailing address is 600 Dexter Avenue, Montgomery, AL 36130. The email form for the Governor's office can be found at http://governor.state.al.us/contact/contact_form.aspx.

SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION SOUGHT

Twenty-one Senators have co-sponsored a bill introduced by Sen. Preuitt D-Talladega (SB154) that would reimburse Higher Education institutions for mandated expenses that were imposed for the current fiscal year but not funded. Specifically, we were forced to pay higher PEEHIP premiums and the university match for the TRS. We did not receive an appropriation sufficient to cover these unfunded mandates. However, K-12 and the two-year colleges were fully funded for these two budget items.

SB154 provides funds to fully fund Higher Ed. This is an issue of fairness and equality. Please thank Sen. Preuitt for sponsoring SB154 and the co-sponsors of the bill, Dial D-Lineville, Holley D-Elba, Denton D-Muscle Shoals, Biddle R-Gardendale, Mitchem D-Albertville, T. Little D-Auburn, Singleton D-Greensboro, Dixon R-Montgomery, Smitherman D-Birmingham, Byrne R-Montrose, Means D-Attalla, Waggoner R-Vestavia Hills, Myers R-Mobile, Erwin R-Montevallo, Barron D-Fyffe, Tanner D-Theodore, Mitchell D-Luverne, Butler D-Madison, Marsh R-Anniston, Escott D-Birmingham and French R-Birmingham, and contact those who did not and ask them to support the legislation.

GOVERNOR'S BUDGET AVAILABLE ON INTERNET

The State of Alabama Executive Budget 2005-2006 can be downloaded or read it directly from the website. To access the viewable document: <http://www.budget.alabama.gov/buddoc2006.pdf>.

To download: go to <http://www.budget.alabama.gov/buddoc2006.zip>. Click on the Alabama State Government Finances link near the bottom of the page and look for the section titled Executive Budget Document. Click the link for Fiscal Year 2005-2006 to download the document. You will need Adobe Acrobat Reader to read the file and WinZip to open the zipped file. Both programs are available free on the Internet.

Your UA System lobbying team is currently reviewing legislation introduced this week to assess their impact our campuses. On the first day alone, 434 bills were introduced.

HIGHER ED DAY IS MARCH 3

Higher Ed Day in Montgomery is Thursday, March 3. Your participation in this annual event is important! More information about Higher Ed Day will be forthcoming. Please mark your calendars.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Bill Jones: 334-242-2262, wjones@uasystem.ua.edu

Porter Banister: 205-934-5193, pbanister@uasystem.ua.edu

Gary D. Smith: 256-824-6084, gsmith@uasystem.ua.edu

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