

# *Legislative* UPDATE

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

## **Latest Bond Proposal Must Be Defeated**

**Call House and Senate Members This Weekend To Kill The Bill!**

### **PROPOSED BOND ISSUE IS ATTACK ON HIGHER ED**

When the Legislature meets Tuesday, committees will consider an \$82 million bond issue bill that is another attempt to weaken Higher Education's case before the Supreme Court. Sen. Jeff Enfinger (D-Huntsville) introduced the bill in the Senate and Rep. Richard Lindsey (D-Centre) is the sponsor in the House. The measure (affecting the current-year budget) would give the bond money to whichever party loses the Supreme Court battle.

The plan is fiscally unsound – the equivalent of taking out a second mortgage to pay this month's light bill – and it fails to address the basic ongoing funding shortfall for K-12 and Higher Ed and the need for equal treatment of the two **whenever** proration should be declared.

**Legislators who support this latest bond issue are opposing Higher Ed's efforts in the State Supreme Court.** Because of the Administration's unwillingness to seek an equitable solution, it will be up to the Court to determine if Higher Ed employees and students will be permanently relegated to the status of "second-class citizens."

**Please contact your House and Senate members now and ask them to kill the measure!  
Stop House Bill 943/Senate Bill 626.  
Stand tall for equitable treatment of Higher Ed and K-12.**

(For information on how to reach your Legislator: [www.legislature.state.al.us/misc/zipsearch.html](http://www.legislature.state.al.us/misc/zipsearch.html) or call your government relations rep for names and numbers.)

### **UPDATE ON SUPREME COURT ISSUES**

In a 9-0 decision Wednesday afternoon, the Alabama Supreme Court granted our motion to consolidate and expedite the proration case now before them. The action was a positive move for Higher Ed. Under the schedule set by the Court, all briefs will be filed by the end of May, so the Court should be able to rule on the entire case early this summer.

### **CONTACT LEGISLATORS NOW WITH HIGHER ED'S REQUEST**

The Alabama Senate is expected to take up the 2001-2002 budget bill next week. When you call your Senators at home this weekend about the bond issue bill, please urge their support for fair and equitable treatment for all of education – K-Ph.d. – as the 2001-2002 budget is finalized.

There has been some movement to derail the negotiated agreement that has united Higher Ed throughout the Legislative session. Those who oppose fair and equitable funding for all of education see obvious merits in dividing colleges and universities by offers of special treatment and under-the-table “deals.”

Your calls to Senators should state our request:

- **Honor the negotiated agreement reached by bipartisan Legislative leadership, the Governor’s Office, Higher Ed and K-12.**
- **Any new money added to the 02 budget should be added back on the same percentage basis as the proration reductions were made.**

## **YOUR VOICE IS BEING HEARD BY ELECTED OFFICIALS**

With your help, Higher Ed is a force to be reckoned with in Montgomery. Your consistent and persuasive messages are having a major impact on the proration issue and on the 2001-2002 education budget. Elected officials – particularly House and Senate members – are hearing our request for fair and equitable treatment in the budget process.

Support from the state’s newspaper editors and widespread understanding of our “fairness” request by the general public are powerful factors that also strengthen our position in the Legislature. All calls will help preserve the negotiated agreement passed by the Alabama House of Representatives.

Thank you for answering the calls to action and delivering our unified message to decision-makers in a clear and succinct way. Your calls, visits, personal letters and faxes began a ripple effect that is now a steady and growing wave of persuasive communication about the need for fair and equitable treatment of all education.

## **CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENTS EMPHASIZE UNITY IN EDUCATION FAMILY**

In an op-ed column published statewide, UA System Chancellor Tom Meredith emphasized that K-12 and Higher Ed share goals and urgent funding needs. Meredith reiterated the fact that K-12 and Higher Education are not at war. The education family together faces two formidable adversaries: the AEA, which is trying to drive a wedge between Higher Ed and K-12, and a funding process that does not adequately meet basic needs of any education entities.

Meredith’s message, which is being reiterated by Presidents Franz, Reynolds, Sorensen and leadership of the Council of Presidents, clarifies the facts about endowments, reserves, and tuition. Higher Ed leaders are also debunking the AEA’s claims that K-12 students are relegated to attending classes in “tin cans,” as depicted in the massive AEA ad campaign. It is important to remember that a 1998 state bond issue, mandated by Governor Siegelman, called for replacement of all portables in K-12 schools. This process is ongoing and in many school systems the portables have already been replaced. New construction is under way at other schools to get rid of the remaining portables. We strongly support these and other efforts to improve K-12 education in Alabama. For the text of Chancellor Meredith’s column, [www.uasystem.ua.edu/SystemAdmin/sys\\_relations.htm](http://www.uasystem.ua.edu/SystemAdmin/sys_relations.htm)

## **HIGHER ED’S SUCCESS BASED ON UNITY AND CONSISTENCY**

By maintaining a unified Higher Ed position on proration and the 2001 budget and through the aggressive participation of the entire Higher Ed community – faculty, staff, students, parents and alumni – we can achieve the goal of fair and equitable funding. Otherwise, we can be relegated to the status of “second-class citizens.”

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

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For a copy of this newsletter click this link: [www.uasystem.ua.edu/SystemAdmin/sys\\_relations.htm](http://www.uasystem.ua.edu/SystemAdmin/sys_relations.htm) and then click the Legislative Update – May 4, 2001 link.