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Friday, February 21, 2014

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FULL TEXT

Ala. House approves Ten Commandments bill

The Associated Press

February 21, 2014

Kim Chandler

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — The Ten Commandments could be displayed in Alabama public schools and state government buildings if mixed with historical and education documents, under

a proposed constitutional amendment approved Thursday by the Alabama House of Representatives.

Lawmakers voted 77-19 in favor of the measure, which now moves to the Alabama Senate. Voters must also approve the amendment for it to become law.

"This country was founded on godly principles. ... That's our roots," said bill sponsor Rep. DuWayne Bridges, R-Valley. "We have a right to go back to what our roots are."

Bridges said people would be free to worship how they choose and that the displays would not promote a particular religious view. Opponents predicted the displays would prompt lawsuits and be looked on by the courts as illegal attempts to establish a preferred religion in Alabama.

"Our courts and our Constitution have spoken on this issue," said Rep. Chris England, D-Tuscaloosa.

Bridges predicted the constitutional amendment would pass overwhelmingly and that he was upholding his oath of office by doing what voters wanted.

"Part of the oath I took was to uphold the Constitution," England replied. "My argument to you could be right now, I'm upholding my oath by telling you there have been numerous court decisions that do not allow the display of this document because of its religious foundation and the appearance it gives that it is state-established religion."

The proposed legislation says the Ten Commandments displays must adhere to "constitutional requirements, including, but not limited to, being intermingled with historical or educational items." The bill does not say how many such items should be added.

The U.S. Supreme Court in 2005 struck down Ten Commandment displays in two Kentucky courthouses. However, the court approved a display on that was combined with nearly 40 other monuments and markers on the Texas Capitol lawn.

After reading the Ten Commandments on the House floor, Rep. Richard Baughn, R-Lynn, said, "I don't know why anybody would disagree with these ten."

"We are the greatest nation on the Earth because God's hand of blessing has been on us," Baughn said.

The debate digressed into exchanges where lawmakers sometimes incorrectly named commandments, discussed the age of Jesus and speculated on if the people behind the 1963 bombing of Birmingham's 16th Street Baptist Church were in heaven or hell.

Some lawmakers tried unsuccessfully to amend the bill, suggesting that Bible verses or a copy of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech should be included in Ten Commandment displays.

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Tracking the 2014 session: Alabama House approves Ten Commandments bill

Al.com

February 20, 2014

Mike Cason

MONTGOMERY, Alabama --- After a rambling two-hour debate, the Alabama House of Representatives passed a proposed constitutional amendment to allow displays of the Ten Commandments on state property and in public schools.

House Bill 45 by Rep. Duwayne Bridges, R-Valley, now goes to the Senate.

The bill passed by a vote of 77-19, with Democrats casting all the no votes.

If approved by the Senate it would also have to be approved by voters statewide.

Thursday was the 16th meeting day of the legislative session.

What they did

Senate:

-- Gave final passage to HB 254, which requires teens to get parental permission to use tanning salons. Goes to governor.

-- Gave final passage to HB 155, which takes jurisdiction of complaints about telephone service from the Public Service Commission. Goes to governor.

-- Passed SB 164, which would change from a felony to a misdemeanor the penalty for falsifying an application for a new state-issued photo voter ID.

-- Passed SB 79, which makes mandatory the use of a preferred vendor program that gives Alabama companies a 5 percent advantage in competing for some state contracts.

-- Passed SB 85, which allows veterans' families to benefit from a scholarship program regardless of whether the veteran served during war time.

-- Debated, but took no action on a bill to regulate wind farms and a bill to authorize a \$100 million bond issue to help school systems convert to digital textbooks.

House:

-- Approved a bill clarifying that the state sales tax applies to prepaid calling cards.

-- Passed a number of sunset bills, which are periodic reviews of state agencies.

-- House Judiciary Committee passed a bill to strengthen the state law on synthetic “spice” type drugs and a bill to make it a crime to knowingly install a counterfeit airbag in a vehicle.

Coming up

The House returns at 1 p.m. Tuesday; the Senate returns at 2 p.m.

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Alabama senator seeks Common Core repeal

The Associated Press

February 21, 2014

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — Republican Sen. Scott Beason has filed legislation to repeal the Common Core curriculum standards from Alabama schools.

Beason filed the bill Thursday, calling Common Core one of the most pressing issues in the state. The Gardendale senator says he believes people want a legislative vote on the issue.

Common Core has split Republicans. Repeal has become a rallying cry from state tea party groups who call it a federal overreach into education. Business associations have embraced the standards.

However, Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh says Beason's bill will not get to the Senate floor, although he said he will continue to study the issue. Marsh says the federal government isn't controlling education in Alabama. He says he gets regular letters from teachers who thank him for supporting the standards.

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Alabama Association of School Boards blasts Sen. Scott Beason's Common Core repeal bill

Al.com

February 20, 2014

Mike Cason

MONTGOMERY, Alabama --- The Alabama Association of School Boards calls a bill to repeal the state's use of Common Core standards in public schools a “giant leap – in the wrong direction.”

Sen. Scott Beason, R-Gardendale, proposed SB 380 today, which would repeal the standards until 2017. Beason said that would allow the state to see how effective the standards are in other states. The State Board of Education voted in 2010 to adopt the standards, which apply to English and math and are used by most states.

The school boards association called Beason's bill "politics at its worst."

“This ill-conceived legislation would throw out new, world-class standards being taught today in classrooms across the state and throw Alabama back into the educational dark ages by forcing schools to teach 2003 math and 1999 English language arts standards,” AASB’s statement said.

“Those standards do not align with those used by any other state or global competitor and would leave our students unprepared for the jobs of the future.”

Alabama GRIT, which stands for “Graduate Ready. Impact Tomorrow.” also issued a statement today supporting Common Core.

GRIT includes 33 statewide organizations representing parents, business leaders, educators and military personnel, according to a statement from the group.

Jessica Hammonds, executive director of GRIT, said that under previous academic standards, too many high school graduates have had to take remedial courses before starting college or a career.

“Alabama’s College and Career Ready Standards were put in place by a democratically elected school board to help give our children the real life skills they need to be successful after they leave the classroom,” Hammonds said.

"Alabamians believe this is a conversation for the State Board of Education, and we encourage our State Senators and Representatives to allow that conversation to continue.”

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State superintendent fears 'far-reaching and negative potential impact' of common core repeal

Al.com

February 21, 2014

Evan Belanger

MONTGOMERY, Alabama -- Out of town on business Thursday, State Education Superintendent Tommy Bice had relatively little to say about the latest attempt by state Republicans to repeal Alabama's controversial common core education standards.

"I am reviewing the bill and gathering facts as to its far-reaching and negative potential impact on not only K-12 public education and the students we serve, but our current alignment with Alabama's community colleges, institutions of higher education and business and industry," Bice said in his only public statement.

[Related: See what common core detractors have to say about Alabama's new policy governing the use of student data]

Sen. Scott Beason, R-Gardendale, who is running for U.S. Congress this year, proposed the repeal filing Senate Bill 380 on Thursday.

If approved, it would repeal the standards adopted in 2010 by the state board of education, reinstating the standards in place before that.

Beason said the repeal would give the state time to see if the standards, adopted in 45 other states, worked there before implementing them in Alabama.

[Related: Is Alabama destined for the same common core misfire as New York?]

However, education officials point out the standards in place before 2010 had not been updated since the mid 2000s, making them grossly out of date.

Even then, the standards in place immediately before the 2010 change were so similar to the common core, the state would have to repeal math standards back to the 1999 level to effectively get rid of the common core standards.

[Related: State education board alters common core standards in response to criticism]

The future of Beason's bill, the first attempt by state Republicans this year to repeal the controversial standards -- after multiple failures in 2013 -- remains uncertain.

State Sen. Del Marsh, R-Anniston, the president pro tempore of the Senate, halted efforts last year, saying the issue was too important to rush.

Before the start of the 2014 session, he said any attempt to repeal the common core this year would be unlikely to reach the Senate floor for a vote.

[Related: Find out why this prominent conservative supports the common core]

The 2014 repeal attempt, Senate Bill 280, has 14 Republican cosponsors, including Sen. Dick Brewbaker, R-Pike Road, who led the attempt to repeal the standards in 2013.

The common core are education standards developed through the Common Core State Standards Initiative, a cooperative initiative of the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association with funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and others.

The initiative came as a response to a report from the American Diploma Project that said 28 percent of high school graduates nationwide were not prepared for college math or English.

[Related: State education board rescinds common core agreement, but remains committed to controversial standards]

Education standards are intended to tell schools and teachers what students should learn in each grade in order to be prepared for college or career upon graduation.

Adopted by the Alabama State Board of Education in 2010, joining 44 other states, the standards cover math and English Language Arts.

Alabama implemented the standards for math in 2012 and for English this school year.

The state has not adopted the standardized Common Core assessments offered by the initiative, instead opting for an ACT product aligned with the new standards.

The first test results under the new standards will not be available until this fall at the earliest, according to school officials.

[Related: Early data shows fewer Alabama students test proficient than under old standards and tests]

The standards have been criticized as a federal intrusion into state-run education since the Obama administration announced in 2009 that states seeking certain education grants would be scored in part on whether they had adopted the common core.

They have also criticized the standards as an untested experiment.

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Who supports the common core? Business, education leaders ask Alabama Legislature to ignore repeal bill

Al.com

February 21, 2014

Evan Belanger

MONTGOMERY, Alabama -- A coalition of educators, business leaders and civic organizations is asking the Alabama Legislature to ignore a bill that would repeal the state's controversial common core education standards.

"Under our old academic standards, too many graduates have been required to take remedial classes before starting college or a career," said Jessica Hammonds, executive director of Alabama GRIT.

"Alabamians believe this is a conversation for the State Board of Education, and we encourage our state senators and representatives to allow that conversation to continue."

[Related: Sen. Scott Beason, R-Gardendale, introduces bill to repeal common core]

GRIT, which stands for Graduate Ready Impact Tomorrow, is an ad hoc group formed to fight attempts to repeal the common core standards adopted in 2010 by the Alabama State Board of Education.

Its members include the following:

- A+ Education Partnership,
- Alabama Alliance for Arts Education,
- Alabama Association of School Boards,
- Alabama Association of School Business Officials,

- Alabama ASCD,
- Alabama Council of Teachers of Mathematics,
- Alabama Literacy Alliance,
- Alabama Mathematics, Science, Technology Education Coalition,
- Alabama National Board Certified Teachers Network,
- Alabama PTA,
- Alabama School Library Association,
- Alabama State Council on the Arts,
- Alabama State Department of Education,
- Birmingham Business Alliance,
- Birmingham Education Foundation,
- Black Belt Education Coalition,
- Business Council of Alabama,
- Chamber of Commerce Association of Alabama,
- Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham,
- Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools,
- Greater Birmingham Math Partnership,
- Huntsville Council of PTAs,
- Huntsville/Madison County Chamber of Commerce,
- The Literacy Council of Central Alabama,
- Manufacture Alabama,
- Mike and Gillian Goodrich Foundation,
- Military Child Education Coalition,
- Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce,
- Mobile Area Education Foundation,
- Montgomery Education Foundation,
- The Schools Foundation of Madison County,
- School Superintendents of Alabama, and
- VOICES for Alabama's Children.

Adopted by 45 states, the District of Columbia and four U.S. territories, the common core is a set of standards developed through the Common Core State Standards Initiative, a cooperative initiative of the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association with funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and others.

The initiative came as a response to a report from the American Diploma Project that said 28 percent of high school graduates nationwide were not prepared for college math or English.

[Related: Early data shows fewer Alabama students test proficient than under old standards and tests]

Education standards are intended to tell schools and teachers what students should learn in each grade in order to be prepared for college or career upon graduation.

The common core standards apply only to math and English. Alabama implemented the standards for math in 2012 and for English this school year.

The state has not adopted the standardized Common Core assessments offered by the initiative, instead opting for an ACT product aligned with the new standards.

The first test results under the new standards will not be available until this fall at the earliest, according to school officials.

The standards have been criticized as a federal intrusion into state-run education since the Obama administration announced in 2009 that states seeking certain education grants would be scored in part on whether they had adopted the common core.

They have also criticized the standards as an untested experiment.

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Jacksonville plant to expand, adding 106 jobs

The Anniston Star

February 20, 2014

JACKSONVILLE — Workers in hard hats, a few international business people and local elected officials encircled Gov. Robert Bentley in a Jacksonville plant Thursday to hear that Shelco Foundries is expanding.

The announcement had been expected for several months. The company, which makes iron components for large engines, plans to add 106 jobs by the end of 2015. The workers who take the new jobs will fill a new 65,000-square-foot machining facility to be built at the company's current location on Francis Street.

“This has been a good week,” said Bentley, referring to the 2,000 new jobs expected for a Remington Arms manufacturing plant in Huntsville. “One hundred and six jobs here in Jacksonville are just as important to Jacksonville as 2,000 jobs are to Huntsville.”

Gnutti Carlo USA, an engine component manufacturer with a presence in at least seven countries, bought Shelco Foundries' former parent company, WH Industries, in January 2012. In so doing, it also took ownership of Shelco Foundries and began making improvements at the Jacksonville business, said Paul Buchanan, Gnutti's managing director.

Buchanan said that when Gnutti took over, Shelco employed 44 workers. Today it employs 97, he said.

Since purchasing the foundry, Gnutti has also paid \$100,000 to clean an existing machine shop and improve the building there. In addition, Buchanan said, the company has invested \$250,000 in equipment upgrades at the foundry in the last year.

The city of Jacksonville, the Calhoun County Commission, the Calhoun County Economic Development Council and the state worked together for several months to woo the company to expand in Alabama. Shelco Foundries already had a machining facility in New Jersey, which the company will close Dec. 31 to end its presence in that state.

Buchanan said the New Jersey machining plant is outdated and there is little land around it to expand. By moving the operation to Alabama, he said, the company will have its foundry and its machining facility within walking distance of each other.

Buchanan said those factors heavily influenced the company's decision to move to Alabama, but Gnutti also had a financial incentive from the city, county and state.

"The right place for our future was not in New Jersey, the right place for our business was right here in sweet home Alabama," Buchanan said.

The company will receive breaks on sales, use and property taxes. Jarrod Simmons, Jacksonville's financial control officer, said the city is estimating the value of the tax break on use and sales taxes — which applies only to goods and services bought for the expansion — at \$207,500.

An additional property tax abatement will save the company \$815,000 over the next 10 years, Simmons said.

On top of that, the company may receive incentives for reaching its employment goals. If it reaches the benchmarks, the state will give the company \$150,000, the city will donate \$62,500, the Calhoun County Economic Development Council will provide \$62,500 and the Calhoun County Commission will add \$25,000.

The company will receive half of the money upon hiring 50 percent of the planned additional employees, and the remaining amount upon hiring all 106 additional employees, Simmons said.

The Thursday announcement began with a groundbreaking ceremony for the new machining facility. That was followed by a series of remarks to foundry employees and a luncheon at Jacksonville State University. In addition to city leaders, university administrators, and economic developers, Mario Gnutti, vice president of the company, and Paolo Groff, the company's CEO, attended the ceremonial events.

The luncheon ended shortly after Mayor Johnny Smith handed Gnutti a ceremonial key to the city and explained the significance of having the company expand in Jacksonville.

"Think about it," Smith said. "That's 106 families that are going to have somebody in that family employed, that might not otherwise have a job."

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Bill would create research, development tax credit

Times Daily
February 20, 2014
Mary Sell

MONTGOMERY — A bill passed in the state Senate today would give Alabama its first research and development income tax credit.

“A lot of states have them, the federal government has them, but Alabama does not,” bill sponsor Sen. Arthur Orr, R-Decatur, said. “The goal would be to attract more research dollars to the state.”

The tax credits will be available to businesses, but research universities will also benefit, Orr said.

“When people give research projects to UAB or anyone else, it helps create jobs,” Orr said. The bill now goes to the House.

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Alabama bill to crack down on synthetic 'spice' drugs called law enforcement's 'most important'

Al.com
February 20, 2014
Mike Cason

MONTGOMERY, Alabama --- A bill that law enforcement called the most important of the session moved closer to becoming law this morning.

The House Judiciary Committee approved SB 333 by Sen. Arthur Orr, R-Decatur, which makes changes to the state law on synthetic drugs sold under many names and sometimes called “spice.”

“This is the most important piece of legislation that we have this year,” State Law Enforcement Secretary Spencer Collier told the committee.

Collier said makers of the drugs are constantly adjusting their products to stay ahead of what the law defines as illegal.

“It’s a constantly evolving crime,” Collier said.

He said use of the drugs is a huge problem and said he appreciated the Legislature moving quickly on an urgent issue.

The committee approved SB 163 by Sen. Jerry Fielding, R-Sylacauga. The bill would make it a crime to intentionally buy or install a counterfeit or nonfunctional airbag in a vehicle. That has

happened in other states, proponents of the bill said. The counterfeit bags are available over the Internet, they said.

The committee also improved SB 151 by Sen. Tom Whatley, R-Auburn, that would make bestiality or the promotion of bestiality for commercial purposes a crime.

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Alabama Senate committee approves bill to regulate lawsuit lending

Al.com

February 20, 2014

Mike Cason

MONTGOMERY, Alabama --- Plaintiffs in personal injury-type lawsuits sometimes take out loans in anticipation of jury awards or settlements.

A bill to regulate lawsuit lending cleared a committee in the Alabama Senate today after proponents said the loans have “exorbitant” interest rates and can hurt consumers and affect the civil justice process.

Senate Bill 231 by Sen. Cam Ward, R-Alabaster, called the Alabama Consumer Lawsuit Lending Act, would cap the interest rates at 10 percent. It would require the lenders to obtain state licenses and be subject to regulations by the State Banking Department.

Eric Schuller, director of governmental affairs for Oasis Legal Finance, a lawsuit lending company, said the 10 percent rate cap would put the company out of business in Alabama.

Schuller said four states have passed laws regulating the industry, but none have interest rate caps.

He said people seeking a civil judgment for damages often need the upfront money for basic needs, such as paying rent or house payments and utility bills.

Ward said the Business Council of Alabama, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Alabama Association for Justice, the state trial lawyers’ group, took part in negotiations on the bill.

Ward said the loans can affect civil courts because plaintiffs are sometimes less likely to agree to settlements after taking out the loans because repaying the debt poses a new liability for them.

Rep. Greg Wren, R-Montgomery, president of the National Conference of Insurance Legislators, said the lawsuit loans are a national issue. He expects the NCIL to draft model legislation to address the issue later this year.

The committee approved the bill after adopting an amendment by Sen. Roger Bedford, D-Russellville, that struck the criminal penalty from the bill.

More news from Alabama politics and the Legislature.

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Alabama Senate passes, barely, bill to reduce crime of falsifying voter ID application to misdemeanor

Al.com

February 20, 2014

Mike Cason

MONTGOMERY, Alabama --- It's not often that Alabama lawmakers pass a bill to reduce a criminal penalty.

The get-tough-on-crime bills are more common.

But today the Alabama Senate barely passed a bill to reduce from a felony to a misdemeanor the penalty for falsifying or fraudulently making an application for a state-issued voter photo ID card.

Alabama's new voter photo ID law, which takes effect with the June 3 primary, requires the state to issue free photo IDs for those who don't have a driver's license or other government-issued photo ID.

Voters applying for the new voter IDs must list date of birth, eye color, weight and height on the application.

Some lawmakers noted that under the current law, a person could conceivably be charged with a felony for incorrectly listing their weight or eye color.

Senate Bill 164 by Sen. Bobby Singleton, D-Greensboro passed by a vote of 14-13. Four Republicans joined nine Senate Democrats and independent Sen. Harri Anne Smith of Slocomb in approving the bill.

It goes to the House.

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Marijuana-derived medical treatment for seizures gets Epilepsy Foundation's support

Al.com

February 20, 2014

Martin J. Reed

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama -- As Alabama lawmakers consider legalization of a marijuana-derived medication to treat seizures and other health issues, the national Epilepsy Foundation released a statement today in support of patients having access to medicinal marijuana as a treatment option.

"The Epilepsy Foundation supports the rights of patients and families living with seizures and epilepsy to access physician directed care, including medical marijuana. Nothing should stand in the way of patients gaining access to potentially life-saving treatment," according to the statement from Epilepsy Foundation President and CEO Philip M. Gattone and Epilepsy Foundation Board of Directors Chairman Warren Lammert.

"If a patient and their healthcare professionals feel that the potential benefits of medical marijuana for uncontrolled epilepsy outweigh the risks, then families need to have that legal option now -- not in five years or ten years. For people living with severe uncontrolled epilepsy, time is not on their side," according to their statement.

The group's statement includes commentary from Dr. Orrin Devinsky, professor of neurology, neurosurgery and psychiatry and director of New York University's Comprehensive Epilepsy Center, in support of the foundation's position.

"Until we have the scientific data, we should make medical marijuana available to physicians who care for people with treatment-resistant epilepsy and their patients," said Devinsky, who is a member of the Epilepsy Foundation National Board of Directors.

"We need to make a balanced decision about compassionate use," Devinsky said. "Trying marijuana or related compounds should be regarded like any other experimental treatment -- a shared decision between patient/parent and doctor, that takes into account the severity of disease, risk and benefits of treatment, and existence of alternate treatment options, all guided by the principle of 'first do no harm.'"

In Alabama, proposed legislation known as Carly's Law aims to legalize the use of the marijuana-derived cannabidiol, also known as CBD, for treatment of adults and children suffering from seizures that other prescription drugs and medical procedures have been unable to control.

The CBD treatment does not create the intoxicating effects produced by typical marijuana ingestion, and many families in Alabama are urging the Legislature to legalize the substance that is allowed in Colorado, where some are moving to use the medication.

Birmingham-area parent Dustin Chandler, whose daughter is the bill's inspiration, said the Epilepsy Foundation's stance helps support the arguments for legalizing CBD oil in Alabama.

"Obviously it's huge news for the suffering children of Alabama and the people of Alabama for one of the leading neurologists in the country to say that they need access now," Chandler said in an interview today. "I think this bolsters Carly's Law's chance of passing through the Legislature. In my opinion, lawmakers cannot ignore such a strong endorsement from the Epilepsy Foundation."

Geography should not dictate where medical treatments are available, according to the Epilepsy Foundation's statement.

"The Epilepsy Foundation believes that an end to seizures should not be determined by one's zip code. ... Families looking to access medical marijuana as a treatment are facing terrible decisions," according to the organization's statement. "In the past, when therapies not yet approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) were available abroad and left only to those who could afford to travel, we fought for compassionate access. We are here to continue the fight."

The Epilepsy Foundation urges caution and the need for further research on the matter.

"Treatments for epilepsy with any form of marijuana come with risks, as there is much that is not known about its effects. The consistency of available formulations also needs to be addressed. Caution is appropriate, and we strongly recommend that patients with uncontrolled seizures seek out an epilepsy specialist," the organization said.

"However, existing therapies have real side-effects both known and unknown, and, just as there are risks with any treatment, every day without seizure control is a risk to life. Every seizure is a possible opportunity lost to live, learn, and grow," the group said.

The Epilepsy Foundation calls for the Drug Enforcement Administration to end restrictions that limit clinical trials and research into medical marijuana for epilepsy. "Certain components of medical marijuana, including CBD, have shown effectiveness in animal studies, and there have been encouraging anecdotal reports from patients. But further research and unbiased clinical trials are needed to establish whether and in what forms medical marijuana is or is not effective and safe," the group states.

Supporters of Carly's Law are holding a rally at the Pelham Civic Complex from 2 to 6 p.m. on March 1. Speakers include state Rep. Mike Ball of Madison who sponsored the bill and Colorado's Paige Figi, whose young daughter Charlotte Figi had suffered 300 seizures a week but dropped to a couple or so a month after using the marijuana-derived treatment.

"That is what we are asking for is the chance of hope that we have another option in the state of Alabama," Chandler said. "There are kids out there that need access now and the Epilepsy Foundation agrees with us."

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Bo talks about biking for Bama and longing to return to Auburn

Opelika-Auburn News

February 20, 2014

Sara Falligant

Members of the Auburn Chamber of Commerce gathered Wednesday for the organization's annual meeting, where a number of area businesses and individuals were recognized for their contribution to the community during 2013.

The event also featured Auburn legend Bo Jackson as guest speaker.

“It’s always a pleasure to come back home. This is home for me,” Jackson, who lives in Chicago, said. “One day, I hope to be back here. But right now, snow duty calls.”

In his address to the crowd, Jackson promoted the upcoming Bo Bikes Bama, where he will pedal across the state to raise money for the Governor’s Emergency Relief Fund. Inspired by the devastating April 2011, tornadoes, Jackson first biked through Alabama in 2012. Now with the event in its third year, Jackson said the ride has raised nearly \$1 million.

This year’s ride on April 19 will begin and end in Auburn.

“The A-Day game, I will be here. Bo Bikes Bama will be here. It’s almost like a family reunion,” Jackson said. “My lifetime goal is to do Bo Bikes Bama every year... to raise funds for future Alabama disasters.”

In introducing Jackson, Auburn University athletic director Jay Jacobs praised the Heisman trophy winner, touting Jackson as “not only a great athlete, he’s a great man.”

Auburn Mayor Bill Ham Jr. also celebrated Jackson’s achievements both athletic and nonathletic.

“He is the greatest athlete of our time,” Ham said. “But I submit that he’s been even greater off the field.”

Ham then turned his attention to area businesses, noting companies located in Auburn employ more than 5,250 people and pay nearly \$1.8 million in occupational taxes. The city will continue to invest in bringing retail and technology businesses into the area.

Jacobs said Auburn University game days have helped bolster the economy.

“In March of 2011, Dr. (Jay) Gogue challenged us to have the best game day environment in the nation,” he said, adding a fun environment not only brings people to sporting events, it also encourages them to spend money at local businesses.

Before Jackson took the stage, Auburn Chamber 2013 Chairman Alex Muncie presented the 2013 Chairman’s Award to Bob Dumas, Auburn Bank president and CEO, for his service to the community.

“What a humbling award. Even the mayor kept it a secret,” Dumas said. “My foundation happens to be my family and Auburn. War Eagle, and thank you very much.”

The chamber also celebrated Tigers’ head football coach Gus Malzahn and his wife, Kristi, for their commitment to Auburn. Malzahn was presented the chamber’s Spirit of Auburn Award.

“They’re ambassadors for Auburn, be it the city or the university,” Muncie said.

Malzahn said he was not expecting the award.

“We love Auburn, and to be back as head coach is just a dream come true.”

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8 tips for getting a job at Alabama's new Remington plant

Al.com

February 21, 2014

Lee Roop

HUNTSVILLE, Alabama - Here are eight tips to getting employable for the new Remington plant that will open in Huntsville as soon as 2015. The plant will employ 2,000 people at peak production. Based on interviews with experts (see below), this isn't the only way to go, but it's a way you can start moving toward a new job.

1 Do a skills inventory. Do you have - or will you work to get - the skills required to work at a modern manufacturing plant? Some estimates say the plant will hire 800 machinists alone, so Remington will have many technical needs. But a plant this size will need "a whole set of trades," in one expert's words, to get open, staffed and working. The plant will likely be looking for everything from tradespeople to accountants, maintenance people to security guards. You won't have to be a machinist to work there.

2. Bookmark and keep an eye on this Alabama Industrial Development Training website. It lists jobs at companies, the skills needed and what state training might be available. The state has committed to spend \$16 million recruiting and training workers for Remington over the next 10 years, and this is where you'll learn about that.

3. Do your skills need an upgrade? If they do, you can wait for AIDT or you can move now by enrolling in classes at a local junior college or technical school. North Alabama has two good state schools in J. F. Drake Technical College and Calhoun Community College, and there are good ones around the state. Check here to find the one near you. If you started this fall, you could complete a full two-year certification program just as the plant is running full blast.

4. Don't think you have to commit to a two-year program. You can if you want an Advanced Manufacturing Certificate or similar credential. But there are classes and certifications that take much less time.

5. Do not let money scare you. For one thing, classes may be cheaper than you think. One credit hour costs \$140 at Calhoun Community College in Huntsville, for example, and there are certificate programs that take as few as 27 hours. Financial help is also available through the state incentive package, the federal Workforce Investment Act, Pell Grants and even the dreaded student loans.

6. If you don't have skills and you're not sure what technical field might be worth pursuing, keep reading. You still have two good options: Visit a career coach at one of the two-year or technical schools or go to one of the state's career centers. In Huntsville, the center is co-located with the state employment service on Sparkman Drive near Memorial Parkway. Experts at these centers will interview you and help you decide what you might do.

7. If you can't think that far ahead, try this simple step: Make an appointment with the admissions staff at a two-year college or technical school near you. They can put you in contact with a career coach. They can also show you the labs and facilities available on campus and let you talk to people teaching and taking classes. What's the work like? What's it pay? Can you see yourself doing this?

8. Quit reading and get moving. Take the first step.