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FULL TEXT

**Bill to ban abortions after fetal heartbeat approved by Alabama committee**

*The Associated Press*

February 25, 2014

MONTGOMERY | A bill to ban abortions after a fetal heartbeat is detected, which can happen as early as six weeks into a pregnancy, passed a legislative committee Tuesday, as Alabama becomes the latest state to consider a slate of tough new restrictions of the procedure.

Abortion opponents are seeking through state laws to make a dent in the Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling that legalized abortion. Proponents of the fetal heartbeat said it would protect the unborn, while opponents called it blatantly unconstitutional and destined to be stopped by the courts.

"When we hear the sound, we know there is life. That

is why it's very important for us not to kill a live, beating heart. We just pray that this bill will pass this session," said Rep. Mary Sue McClurkin, R-Indian Springs. During the House Health Committee meeting, McClurkin wore a button with a photo of an unborn fetus that had a small flashing red light to signify the heart.

The National Institutes of Health's website for patients says an embryonic or fetal heartbeat can be heard at six to seven weeks. A fetal heartbeat can generally be detected earliest using a vaginal ultrasound, although McClurkin's bill does not specify a method for detection.

The bill was approved by the committee with little opposition, but two members said the state was setting itself up for a lawsuit with a bill that clearly conflicts with current legal precedent.

"You can detect a fetal heartbeat at six weeks. If you are outlawing abortion at six weeks, you are clearly violating federal law," Rep. Joe Hubbard, D-Montgomery.

"It is very bad policy idea to create legislation that creates lawsuits," Hubbard said.

Next up is a vote on the bill by the full House.

North Dakota approved similar heartbeat legislation, but a federal judge put the law on hold while a legal challenge plays out in court.

Bill Klein, president of Alabama Citizens for Life, said some abortion opponents want to use heartbeat laws as a test case with the U.S. Supreme Court in the hopes of getting the court to revisit *Roe v. Wade*.

"The *Dred Scot* decision was in conflict with reality, too, and it was reversed," Klein said referring to the decision that said African-Americans could not be considered citizens.

Klein said personhood bills started with the same intent, but hit a wall over the potential to outlaw fertility treatments and early contraceptives.

The Alabama committee approved a total of four bills to put new limits on abortion.

Current Alabama law requires women to receive information about abortion alternatives and possible adverse outcomes 24 hours before scheduling an abortion. One of the Alabama proposals would increase the waiting period to 48 hours.

Another bill would require women seeking an abortion because of lethal fetal anomalies to be advised of the availability of perinatal hospice services. The fourth bill would require parents to submit a birth certificate, or other proof of parenthood, when giving consent for their daughter to have an abortion.

Abortion opponents rallied outside the Alabama Statehouse Tuesday urging lawmakers to give final approval to the restrictions.

“It’s amazing to me that we have people in this country, that profess to be Christians and God-fearing, that believe it’s OK to kill those babies before they ever get a chance to live,” Sen. Scott Beason, R-Gardendale, told the crowd.

The bills come in a legislative session that leads directly into campaign season.

Susan Watson, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Alabama, called the bills an attempt to “garner votes in the upcoming election at a woman’s expense.”

“These bills demoralize and dehumanize women and turns them into hostages. They need and want health care, but they can’t get it unless they meet a career politician’s criteria. What exactly gives a politician the right to decide what a woman needs or doesn’t need or what procedures she can and can’t have?” Watson said.

The proposed restrictions come on the heels of an Alabama clinic regulation law approved last year that required abortion doctors to have admitting privileges at a local hospital. The requirement is now being litigated in court.

Alabama lawmakers previously approved a 24-hour waiting period before abortions and a requirement for a woman to have an ultrasound before having one. Alabama in 2011 approved a bill that would ban abortion after 20 weeks of pregnancy.

Speaker of the House Mike Hubbard, R-Auburn, said he believed all four of the latest bills will get final passage.

Asked about the heartbeat Tuesday, Gov. Robert Bentley said his office is studying the bill, as it does all legislation.

“I am a very-pro-life, strongly pro-life,” Bentley said.

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**Alabama House committee approves new restrictions on abortions (updated)**

*Al.com*

February 25, 2014

Mike Cason

MONTGOMERY, Alabama --- Four bills that would add new restrictions on abortions in Alabama won approval today in a committee in the state House of Representatives.

One of the bills would ban many abortions that are now legal in the state.

House Bill 490 by Rep. Mary Sue McClurkin, R-Indian Springs, would require doctors to check for a fetal heartbeat before abortions and would ban abortions if a heartbeat is detected.

According to the National Institutes of Health, fetal heartbeats can be detected six to seven weeks into a pregnancy. Alabama law currently allows abortions up to 20 weeks.

The House Health Committee also approved:

-- HB 493 by Rep. Kurt Wallace, R-Maplesville, which would require doctors to give women information about perinatal hospice services before aborting a fetus with a lethal anomaly, a defect reasonably certain to result in death within three months after birth.

-- HB 489 by Rep. Ed Henry, R-Hartselle, which would increase from 24 hours to 48 hours the period a woman must wait before an abortion after receiving state-mandated information about adoption services, father's obligations and on other issues.

-- HB 494 by Rep. Mike Jones, R-Andalusia, which would tighten restrictions on parental consent for minors to get abortions.

All four bills were approved on voice votes without much discussion. The committee held public hearings on the bills last week.

Reps. Berry Forte, D-Eufaula and Joe Hubbard, D-Montgomery, did express concerns about the likelihood that some of the bills would be challenged in court, resulting in costs to the state.

"You're talking about a bundle of money the taxpayers have to pay," Forte said.

An anti-abortion rally was held outside the State House after the meeting.

David Day of Montgomery, 37, who attended the rally, said he would like to see abortion banned outright rather than the incremental steps sought by the legislation.

"A baby is a baby, and no matter how we look at it, it is simply murder," Day said. "If a bill is truly pro-life, it's all points of conception."

Cheryl Ciamarra, board director to the National Right to Life Committee for Alabama Citizens for Life, said other states have passed differing versions of the fetal heartbeat bill. She said one in Arkansas has been enjoined by a court.

Ciamarra said she also had concerns about an amendment to the heartbeat bill added by the committee today that makes an exception for a fetus found to have a lethal anomaly.

Still, Ciamarra said the bill overall is a good step.

"It is a good education for people in the public to understand that every abortion stops a beating heart," she said.

Susan Watson, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Alabama, told the Associated Press that the bills were an attempt to "garner votes in the upcoming election at a woman's expense."

"These bills demoralize and dehumanize women and turns them into hostages. They need and want health care, but they can't get it unless they meet a career politician's criteria. What exactly gives a politician the right to decide what a woman needs or doesn't need or what procedures she can and can't have?" Watson said.

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### **Abortion bills clear House committee**

*Times Daily*

February 25, 2014

Mary Sell

MONTGOMERY — Four bills that sponsors say are designed to curb the number of abortions in Alabama were approved in committee Tuesday, including one that has been approved in other states and challenged in federal courts.

House Bill 490 bans abortion if a fetal heartbeat can be heard, which could be as early as eight weeks into pregnancy. Current state law bans abortion after 20 weeks of pregnancy.

Tuesday's votes in the House Health Committee were done by voice vote, not a recorded roll call. The committee clerk did not record any "no" votes against the bills. But Rep. Joe Hubbard, D-Montgomery, said he did vote against the bill because it is "clearly unconstitutional."

"I'm not in the business of passing laws to pay lawyers' legal fees," he said after the meeting.

Arkansas and North Dakota have passed similar laws, and both have been challenged in court for being unconstitutional.

Opponents of the legislation say lawsuits are a possibility should the bill become law.

"We would explore every option to make sure that we can continue to serve the women who count on us for care, including potential lawsuits," Nikema Williams, Planned Parenthood Southeast vice president of public policy, said Tuesday.

Rep. Mary Sue McClurkin's bill has 26 co-sponsors, including Rep. Ed Henry, R-Hartselle, Rep. Terri Collins, R-Decatur, and Rep. Lynn Greer, R-Rogersville.

"Anything we can do to reduce abortions, we need to do," Greer said last week. He also said he's not sure the legislation can pass. "But at least we're making a statement," he said.

The other bills approved Tuesday are:

- House Bill 493 — requires physicians to provide to women whose fetuses aren't likely to survive to birth or long afterward, information about hospice services available if she carries to term. If abortion providers don't provide the information, they can be charged criminally.
- House Bill 494 — Puts more requirements on minors seeking abortions, including making consenting parents prove they are the minor's mother or father.
- House Bill 489 — Changes from 24 to 48 the number of hours a woman must wait between consultation and abortion.

Committee member Henry voted for the four bills. He is the sponsor of the 48-hour bill, which he said has support in the House, Senate and from the governor's office.

"(It) just gives them a little bit more time to think about it and weigh the consequences of that decision," Henry said Tuesday about his bill. Two years ago, Henry admitted at an anti-abortion rally that when he was younger, he'd gone with a girlfriend to get an abortion.

He said he doesn't expect legal challenges to his bill.

"This is quite possibly the easiest piece of legislation we have before us concerning saving the lives of children in that several states already require 48 hour waiting periods," Henry said.

The bills now go on to the House and will likely be voted on there next week. From there, they go to the Senate.

Jennifer Ardis, a spokeswoman for Gov. Robert Bentley, said Tuesday the governor hasn't yet fully reviewed the bills, but he is strongly anti-abortion.

In 2012, there were 7,970 abortions in Alabama, according to the Alabama Center of Health Statistics.

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### **General fund budget on House agenda today**

*Times Daily*

February 26, 2014

Mary Sell

MONTGOMERY — The Alabama House could vote this evening on a proposed \$1.8 billion general fund budget for fiscal 2015, which begins Oct. 1.

Most non-education state agencies are supported through the general fund budget.

The proposed budget that was approved in committee last week includes:

- A slight increase for the state's judicial system with a total of about \$112 million;
- About \$389 million for the Department of Corrections, almost \$7 million less than current year funding.
- A slight decrease for the state's district attorneys for a total of \$27.5 million;
- An \$11.8 million decrease in funding for the Department of Human Resources with \$58.7 million;
- About \$40.7 million for the newly formed Alabama Law Enforcement Agency;
- Medicaid, the state's largest non-education expense, would receive \$685 million, a \$70 million increase;
- The state Department of Mental Health would be level-funded at \$104 million.

The budget is slightly larger than the one Gov. Robert Bentley suggested, with about \$1.7 million more allocated to agencies.

When the budget is approved by the House, it will be sent to the Senate.

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### **Tracking the 2014 session: Pistol bill gets public hearing in Alabama Senate committee**

*Al.com*

February 25, 2014

Mike Cason

MONTGOMERY, Alabama --- A bill to make it legal to carry a loaded handgun in a vehicle without a concealed carry permit will be discussed in a public hearing Wednesday at the Alabama State House.

Current law requires a pistol to be unloaded and locked in a compartment out of reach of the driver or passengers if there is no concealed carry permit.

The Senate Judiciary Committee will hold the hearing on Senate Bill 354 by Sen. Scott Beason, R-Gardendale. The meeting begins at 1 p.m.

What they did:

House:

Passed a bill to carve out an exemption in state law to help nonprofit spay-neuter clinics can continue to operate.

The Health Committee approved four abortion bills.

Senate:

Debated, but did not pass, a bill to require some welfare applicants and recipients to be drug-tested.

### Coming up

The Senate Judiciary Committee will consider SB 109, which would change from a misdemeanor to a felony the crimes of promoting gambling, conspiracy to promote gambling and possession of a gambling device.

The Senate Finance and Taxation Education Committee will consider SB 184, the education budget for 2014-2015, and SB 232, a bill to give K-12 and two-year college employees a 2 percent pay raise.

The House Education Policy Committee will hold a public hearing on HB 478, which would prohibit school systems from using seniority as the main factor in deciding which teachers to lay off during cutbacks forced by spending cuts or decreased enrollment.

The House Ethics and Campaign Finance Committee will consider SB 36, a bill to prohibit former legislators from lobbying either chamber of the Legislature within two years after their term ends and make other changes to state ethics laws.

The Senate meets at 3 p.m. Wednesday; the House meets at 3:30.

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### **House OKs bill affecting spay neuter clinics**

*Montgomery Advertiser*

February 26, 2014

Kala Kachmar

After hours of debate, the Alabama House of Representatives passed a bill Tuesday that would allow veterinarians to work at nonprofit spay neuter clinics.

Under current law, veterinarians are only allowed to work for businesses owned by licensed veterinarians.

This is the third year the House has discussed the bill, sponsored by Rep. Patricia Todd, D-Birmingham.

Todd said the bill exempts veterinarians who work at clinics from the requirement that they work for a veterinarian who owns the clinic and its equipment. Most nonprofits aren't run by veterinarians, but are still required to abide by the same standards veterinary practices do and are still licensed and regulated by the Alabama Veterinarian Medical Examiners Board, she said.



Veterinarians already exempt from the requirement are those employed by any federal, state or local agency, those employed by licensed research facilities and those who inherit a veterinarian business under the terms of a will.

The bill also restricts what can be done at a spay neuter clinic to those procedures only, with the exception of a one-year rabies vaccination and treatment of external and intestinal parasites administered only at the time of the spay or neuter surgery.

“Veterinarians would have complete control of the medical practice within that spay neuter clinic,” Todd said. “How many procedures, how they’re done and everything related to the medical care of the animal.”

But some opponents of the bill said they were concerned about the well-being of the animals in these clinics, and the potential damage to struggling veterinary practices that might lose business.

“I do feel strongly about supporting our small businesses,” said Rep. David Standridge, R-Hayden.

Standridge said he’s been contacted by several veterinarians in his community who are concerned about the bill, especially with concerns about standard of care. Standridge’s son is a practicing veterinarian.

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### **Could Alabama become a destination for business formation?**

*Birmingham Business Journal*

February 25, 2014

Brent Godwin

The Alabama House of Representatives passed a bill that makes forming a limited liability company in the state easier.

"By reducing red tape in the business formation process, this bill will ensure that Alabama is on par with other states in terms of attracting new businesses that organize as an LLC," said the bill's sponsor Rep. Paul DeMarco, R- Vestavia Hills.

Alabama's LLC rules, which haven't been updated since 1997, will be changed so that the state can better accommodate businesses. Currently, states like Delaware attract a significant number of LLC formations because of its well-established legal process for business formation.

A few of the proposed changes to Alabama's LLC law include:

- Allowing a framework for LLC's to be used for purposes such as to hold titles to property or for estate planning,
- Recognition of series within LLC's, which is important for protecting involved parties when it comes to financing and liability,
- Recognition of a members' rights and obligations within an LLC

The bill now goes to the Senate for debate.

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### **Alabama House committee approves bill to expand Birmingham Water Works Board**

*Al.com*

February 25, 2014

Mike Cason

MONTGOMERY, Alabama --- An Alabama House of Representatives committee today approved a bill that would expand the Birmingham Water Works Board and limit members to two full terms.

The House Health Committee approved HB 482 by Rep. Jim McClendon, R-Springville. It now moves to the House.

The bill would expand the board from five members to nine, with one member each from Shelby, Blount, St. Clair and Walker counties. When the next vacancy occurs on the current board, that member would be replaced by a Jefferson County resident who lives outside Birmingham.

That means Birmingham would have just four of the nine members and no longer control the board.

Several other bills pending in the Legislature would also expand the board, including one by Sen. Jabo Waggoner, R-Vestavia Hills, that would impose term limits and limit board members' pay.

The bills have drawn some opposition, including from Sen. Rodger Smitherman, D-Birmingham, who has said he wants Birmingham members to retain control of the board.

McClendon said the main purpose of his bill would be to allow St. Clair County and Moody to have some representation on the board.

The Birmingham board bought the Moody water and sewer systems in 1993. It sold the sewer system back to the city in 2008.

McClendon said the Moody is interested in buying the water system back from the board if that is feasible.

Mac Underwood, general manager of the Birmingham Water Works Board, spoke at today's committee meeting in opposition to McClendon's bill.

Underwood said that it would be a mistake to shift board power outside the city and Jefferson County. He said more than 90 percent of the customers are in Jefferson County.

Underwood said the board is willing to discuss selling the Moody system back to Moody. He said the board has invested a lot in the Moody system and it is providing good service.

McClendon said Moody has requested information about the number of customers in Moody, cash flow and volume of water used and has so far not been able to get it from the board. He said that information would help determine whether it would be feasible for Moody to buy the system back.

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### **Auto supplier completes expansion in Enterprise; hiring underway for 100 jobs**

*Al.com*

February 18, 2014

Dawn Kent Azok

ENTERPRISE, Alabama -- HS Automotive Alabama will formally open a new facility in Enterprise on Wednesday that is part of a 100-job expansion project.

The Korean company is an auto supplier that produces weather stripping, tubing and automotive pressure hoses for Hyundai, Kia, Chrysler and General Motors.

The project was announced last year and valued at \$12 million. The new facility covers 65,000 square feet.

This marks the second expansion for the company's Enterprise operations. HSAA broke ground in 2003 and announced its first expansion in 2006.

It currently employs close to 300 people.

Incentives for the project included statutory property tax abatements, excluding school taxes, as well as sales and use tax abatements on construction materials, according to Jonathan Tullos, executive director of the Wiregrass Economic Development Corp.

There were no discretionary incentives.

The hiring process is underway now, Tullos added. People interested in a job can get more information by contacting the Wiregrass EDC.

Gov. Robert Bentley will join local officials for a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Wednesday, his office said today.

Read more state auto industry news in this week's Driving Alabama.

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### **If legislators did their homework, they'd all support Common Core (Opinion from the superintendent of Chickasaw's schools)**

*Al.com*

February 26, 2014

When the city fathers of Chickasaw decided to form their own school system they knew it would be a struggle. But they had no idea that the Alabama legislature would be one of their chief roadblocks.

We are in our second year of existence with 880 students, 92 percent are eligible for free or reduced lunch. Our students thank us daily for the work we do and the barriers we break to prepare them to be successful adults. This includes teaching the Alabama College and Career Ready Standards, which will better prepare them to be marketable when entering careers or colleges. For more information about our students, watch this video:

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E0OM909kbIE>)

Like many systems in Alabama, we are financially strapped. We carefully consider every financial decision and obligation we make. If any system in the state can make a penny squeal when it is pinched, it is Chickasaw.

Since we started in June of 2012 we have allocated financial and human resources to preparing our teachers to teach the more rigorous college and career standards adopted by the state board of education. All monies spent and all professional development of faculty has been done with this in mind.

Now the legislature wants to jerk the rug out from under us. They want to waste all the dollars and time and effort we've invested. They want to change the rules of the game halfway through the second quarter.

They want to repeal the Alabama College and Career Ready standards and have us go back to teaching our kids like we did in 1999. Instead of preparing our students for a global economy, they want to put up a fence around Alabama and act like none of the rest of the world exists.

Why do they want to repeal our standards? Because they are listening to misinformed, persuasive political voices instead of professional educators. It is a sad commentary when a group of elected officials are willing to swap the future of our children for a handful of votes. This is leadership? This is statesmanship?

Our Chickasaw students do their homework. The members of the legislature should do the same thing.

They should research the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results and see where Alabama students rank in reading and math versus the other 49 states. It is clear that our students need rigorous standards and we need to stop threatening to slow down the momentum Alabama's school systems are making. As a leader of a small system in south Alabama, I trust the research-based guidance and direction for our students that is being provided by Alabama's Board of Education and Dr. Tommy Bice, our state superintendent.

I represent over 100 employees who are committed to teaching Alabama's College and Career Ready Standards, who are committed to teaching problem solving, collaboration and critical thinking. The employees of the City of Chickasaw Board of Education are committed to breaking barriers and putting the students we serve in positions to be successful adults. Don't slow our momentum.

There are 15 senators who are sponsors of SB380, the bill to roll back the clock in Alabama. Not a single one has called to find out how this legislation will impact our system and our students.

I will be glad to talk to any legislator about this matter. Or I will call an assembly of all our faculty and students so that any member of the state senate or house can explain how rolling back our standards will be good for them.

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### **EDITORIAL: FCC should keep its nose out of newsrooms**

*Tuscaloosa News*

February 25, 2014

Not no, but ... well, definitely no. That's the G-rated version of our thoughts on the Federal Communication Commission sending "monitors" into newsrooms at television and radio stations to study news content. Before the agency backed away from that plan, it was even talking about venturing into newspaper newsrooms, where it has no regulatory power and no business at all.

FCC Commissioner Ajit Pai revealed in a Wall Street Journal opinion piece that the FCC decided last May to conduct a critical information needs survey of news content to determine what stories news organizations cover and why. The agency determines who receives licenses to broadcast over the public airwaves. Pai's position is that the government has no business nosing around in newsrooms. We couldn't agree more.

The FCC planned to ask why news operations covered certain stories and failed to cover others. It planned to ask reporters if they've ever wanted to cover a story and been told they couldn't. Any reporter that hasn't had his or her ideas shot down by an editor hasn't pitched many stories. It happens all the time and editorial judgment is nobody's business but the news organization's.

First Amendment advocates have always viewed the FCC's regulatory power with apprehension. It is the proverbial camel's nose inside the tent. It allows a government agency to determine who can use the public airwaves and that gives the government a degree of leverage over broadcast news outlets.

Thus far, the government has never extended any form of regulatory power over newspapers. The government can find alternative means to publish legal notices in some cases, but any newspaper worth its salt shouldn't be swayed by an economic threat. And even if the post office withholds its second-class postage permit, a newspaper has other ways to distribute its products. Put plainly, if the FCC sent a monitor to this newspaper — and we'd imagine just about any

other newspaper — said monitor would be escorted to the door and wouldn't be offered a cup of coffee before departing.

But broadcast stations need the public airwaves to stay in business, and the agency that bestows that license shouldn't be in the business of asking questions about a broadcast operation's news content. That is a short step away from government control of news content, which runs contrary to the most basic principles that this country was founded upon.

Frankly, it's frightening that the FCC would even contemplate something like this. This country's foundation is an informed electorate participating in democratic elections. The participants in those elections are mainly kept informed through a news media whose independence is guaranteed by the Constitution. If a government agency controls the content the news media distributes, it controls the people and the elections they participate in. Monitoring the process of gathering and publishing or broadcasting that information is the first step toward control.

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### **Editorial: State should base all raises on realities**

*Montgomery Advertiser*

February 25, 2014

As the Legislature moves into the second half of this year's session, not a great deal has been accomplished, but nothing truly terrible has occurred — yet. The only punches that have been thrown are verbal ones and the leaders of both parties say they're communicating better than they sometimes have in the past.

Maybe this stretch of relative tranquility will continue, but some hard choices are looming that surely will test both individual and institutional tempers. The tough fiscal decisions in the education and General Fund budgets top the list.

It's an election year and legislators historically have tried to give pay raises to teachers and state employees in advance of their re-election campaigns. It's good politics, but not good policy if fiscal realities are discounted in the decision-making process.

That's why we call on the members to make these decisions responsibly and honestly. The issue is not whether teachers and state employees deserve a pay raise; they do. The issue is, or certainly should be, what the state can realistically afford. That may be nothing.

The education budget is always the healthier of the two budgets, so the likelihood of a raise for teachers is considerably greater than for state employees paid from the chronically strapped General Fund. However, it is also important for legislators to remember that across-the-board pay raises have more than a one-year impact. The increases become part of the salary structure in future years as well and also have a long-term impact on retirement costs.

Lawmakers have to be careful to consider to what they are committing the state in the long run, not just what they're adding in the next fiscal year's budgets. This cannot be a purely political decision.

It's important in the education budget, but even more so in the tighter General Fund budget, where legislators are working, as Sen. Dick Brewbaker, R-Pike Road, aptly put it, "completely without a net." There's virtually no wiggle room.

"We've got to get it right or we'll move into proration, and nobody wants that," Brewbaker said.

Indeed not. Overly optimistic budgeting — or budgeting directed by politics instead of reality — that leads to spending cuts months into the fiscal year is deeply damaging to the operations of state government. For key General Fund agencies, notably Medicaid and the Department of Corrections, the effect can be ruinous.

Fiscal responsibility must prevail in the face of election-year pressures. If it does not, the Republican supermajorities in the House and Senate can't point fingers elsewhere. The fault, inescapably, will be theirs.

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### **Biden: There's 'hatred' behind Alabama's photo voter ID law**

*Yellowhammer News*

February 26, 2014

Cliff Sims

At a reception in honor of Black History Month on Tuesday, Vice President Joe Biden said he hopes Congress will "modernize" the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to counter the "hatred" behind voter ID laws in Alabama, North Carolina and Texas.

Alabama's photo voter ID law kicks in this year, but voters without photo identification have two options to get a free ID to meet the requirement. They can either go to the Dept. of Public Safety office in their county and acquire a free non-drivers ID card or go to their local Board of Registrars office to get a free photo ID there.

The United States Justice Department is currently suing North Carolina and Texas in an attempt to block their voter ID laws, arguing they discriminate against minorities.

"These guys never go away," Biden said of supporters of voter ID. "Hatred never, never goes away. The zealotry of those who wish to limit the franchise cannot be smothered by reason."

Alabama has played a significant role in the history of U.S. voting laws.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed in response to racial discrimination in voting, which was prevalent in Alabama and other areas of the country for decades. Section 5 of the Act required certain states and local governments with a history of discrimination to receive "pre-

clearance” by the U.S. Attorney General or a panel of U.S. District Court judges before making any changes to their voting laws or practices.

Shelby County, Ala. sued the U.S. Attorney General in 2011 claiming that portions of the Act were unconstitutional. The case ultimately made its way to the Supreme Court last year. The Court ruled by a 5-to-4 vote that the formula used to determine which areas were subjected to pre-clearance was unconstitutional, effectively gutting the law.

“Alabama has made tremendous progress over the past 50 years, and this decision by the U.S. Supreme Court recognizes that progress,” Alabama Gov. Robert Bentley said at the time. “We will not tolerate discrimination in Alabama.”

But a group of federal lawmakers in January introduced a bill in response to the Court’s decision. Vice President Biden said on Tuesday that he hopes it will pass.

“This fight has been too long, this fight has been too hard, to do anything other than win,” he said.

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### **Biden: New voter ID laws tied to 'hatred'**

*The Hill*

February 25, 2014

Vice President Biden said new voter ID laws in North Carolina, Alabama, and Texas were evidence of “hatred” and “zealotry” during a Black History Month event at the Naval Observatory on Tuesday.

The vice president said his votes to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act were among his proudest as a senator, and expressed frustration with a recent Supreme Court ruling striking down a key provision of the law.

"I thought it was done — finally, finally done," Biden said.

The ruling struck down a provision of the law which required certain jurisdictions with a history of voting suppression to clear any changes in their voting laws with the Justice Department. The court said Congress could update the pre-clearance formula, but lawmakers have been unable to agree on new standards.

Some Southern states have subsequently moved aggressively in the interim to impose new, tougher voter I.D. requirements. Supporters of the legislation, including many Republicans, argue the new standards help prevent voter fraud. But civil rights groups and Democrats have blasted the legislation as an attempt to suppress the vote among poor and minority voters, who are less likely to have government-issued photo identification. They also argue that instances of voter fraud are exceedingly rare.



"These guys never go away. Hatred never, never goes away," Biden said. "The zealotry of those who wish to limit the franchise cannot be smothered by reason."

Biden said both President Obama and Attorney General Eric Holder were committed to protecting voting rights, and said he was hopeful Congress would address the Voting Rights Act formula to stop "this kind of malarkey."

"This fight has been too long, this fight has been too hard, to do anything other than win — not on the margins, but flat out win," Biden said.

Holder has sued Texas and North Carolina in bids to overturn the new voter I.D. laws. And at a speech earlier this month at Georgetown University, Holder called on states to repeal laws that prohibit convicted felons from casting a ballot.

"Those swept up in this system too often had their rights rescinded, their dignity diminished, and the full measure of their citizenship revoked for the rest of their lives," Holder said.

The vice president and his wife, Jill Biden, hosted around 150 guests for the Black History Month reception at his home. Guests included Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.), Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson, Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx, Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson, and senior Obama adviser Valerie Jarrett.