



Speaker's Press Clips
Friday, February 7, 2014

- *Al.com*: [House Rules Committee Chair Mac McCutcheon: Recovery from heart bypass surgery 'on track,' aiming for quick return to Montgomery](#)
- *Yellowhammer News*: [Alabama House Rules Chairman recovering well after two major surgeries](#)
- *Opelika-Auburn News*: [Kemmerich plans to bring 160 new jobs](#)
- *Opelika-Auburn News*: [Medical college breaks ground in Auburn](#)
- *AP*: [Tracking the 2014 session: Summary of action in the Alabama Legislature](#)
- *Al.com*: [Legislature passes bill to allow Jefferson County cities to issue car tags](#)
- *AP*: [More students moving to private schools with Alabama Accountability Act scholarships](#)
- *WSFA*: [Supporters gather at AL State House to protect coal industry jobs](#)
- *AP*: [Qualifying deadline for Democrats, Republicans](#)
- *Al.com*: [From the courthouse to the State House: Attorney Gayle Gear running for open Dist. 17 state senate seat](#)
- *Montgomery Advertiser*: [Joe Hubbard will challenge Luther Strange for attorney general](#)
- *Al.com*: [State Sen. Billy Beasley running for re-election to Senate, rather than for governor](#)
- *AP*: [Retired Air Force Col. Hobbie Sealy of Montgomery seeks GOP nomination for state auditor](#)
- *Al.com*: [Bob Starkey of Scottsboro joins race for Republican nomination for governor](#)
- *AP*: [UCF's Waldrop named president at South Alabama](#)
- *Al.com*: [Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore writes all 50 governors pushing amendment to ban gay marriage](#)

FULL TEXT

House Rules Committee Chair Mac McCutcheon: Recovery from heart bypass surgery 'on track,' aiming for quick return to Montgomery

Al.com

February 6, 2014

Steve Doyle

HUNTSVILLE, Alabama - State Rep. Mac McCutcheon, who is recovering from Jan. 24 heart bypass surgery, says he expects to return to Montgomery for the second half of the legislative session.

McCutcheon, R-Monrovia, also revealed in a Thursday news release that he recently had his gallbladder removed.

"Thanks to Alabama's world-class hospital system, great doctors, and devoted nurses, both procedures went very well and my recovery is on track," said McCutcheon. "The fact that a patient can undergo major heart surgery and be back on his feet so quickly is a testament to the Alabama medical community."

Elected in 2006, McCutcheon is nearing the end of his second term representing parts of northwest Madison County and eastern Limestone County. His District 25 seat includes the Monrovia and Capshaw communities as well as a chunk of the Madison city limits.

McCutcheon is also chairman of the powerful Alabama House Rules Committee. State Rep. Ronald Johnson, R-Sylacauga, has been presiding over committee meetings in his absence.

McCutcheon said he and his wife, Debbie, have been "overwhelmed" by the outpouring of support and prayers for his recovery.

"We are grateful for the kind words from friends, family, and colleagues, and also from countless Alabamians across the state," he said. "Your prayers are working, and I am getting stronger every day."

McCutcheon told AL.com Thursday that he has "every intention" of running for re-election this year to a third term in the state House. He reported a campaign account balance of \$135,903 in a Feb. 1 filing with the Secretary of State's office.

He is currently unopposed, although potential challengers have until 5 p.m. Friday to qualify for the June 3 primary election.

+++

Alabama House Rules Chairman recovering well after two major surgeries

Yellowhammer Politics

February 6, 2014

Cliff Sims

Following a heart bypass surgery and a gallbladder removal in previous weeks, Rep. Mac McCutcheon, R-Huntsville, issued the following statement expressing gratitude for the outpouring of support he has received and providing an update on his recovery:

Debbie and I have been overwhelmed by the amount of support and prayers we have received over the past few weeks. We are grateful for the kind words from friends, family, and colleagues, and also from countless Alabamians across the state. Your prayers are working, and I am getting stronger every day.

Thanks to Alabama's world-class hospital system, great doctors, and devoted nurses, both procedures went very well and my recovery is on track. The fact that a patient can undergo major heart surgery and be back on his feet so quickly is a testament to the Alabama medical community.

I look forward to returning to Montgomery for the second half of the legislative session and continuing the important job the people of Limestone and Madison Counties elected me to do.

McCutcheon is one of the top Republicans in the Alabama House of Representatives, and Chairs the powerful House Rules Committee, the panel that decides what bills come to the floor for a vote.

+++

Kemmerich plans to bring 160 new jobs

Opelika-Auburn News

February 6, 2014

Kristen Oliver

Local and state officials gathered Wednesday at Auburn Technology Park West to welcome a German manufacturing company to the U.S.

Kemmerich Group announced Wednesday the new location of Kemmerich USA L.P. in Auburn. The company plans to invest \$16.5 million in the 60,000square-foot facility, the first of its kind in the U.S.

“Over the last 20 years, the Auburn community has worked hard to entice some of the world’s most illustrious companies,” said Auburn Mayor Bill Ham. “Kemmerich of course will join that family today.”

Ham was joined Wednesday by Gov. Robert Bentley, who said recruiting industries and companies like Kemmerich is important to the state.

“It’s a pleasure to be back here in the Auburn-Opelika area,” Bentley said. “This area truly is growing. It’s part of a state that has been easy to recruit industries to. We have so many things that are going right in this part of the state.”

Bentley welcomed Thomas Bergen, CEO of Kemmerich Group, and Josef Kemmerich, a fourth-generation owner of the company. Bentley said he knew they would find Auburn a good place for their industry and a good place to find efficient workers.

Ham said Auburn is a special place with a lot to offer industries like Kemmerich.

“Auburn University is a critical asset in our recruitment of sophisticated companies like Kemmerich,” Ham said. “Its presence is one of the reasons Kemmerich chose Auburn, Alabama. Auburn University will be an even greater factor in years to come as companies depend on the research capabilities of major research institutions like Auburn.”

Bentley presented Bergen and Kemmerich with a seal of the state of Alabama to hang in the finished facility. He said they could look at it and know they are always welcome in their new home in Alabama.

“Kemmerich’s announcement today confirms that they have discovered what I’ve known for years: Auburn is a special place,” said Alabama House Speaker Mike Hubbard in a press release from the city. “With a tremendous workforce, strong business community, and a prestigious university in our backyard, Auburn provides everything a business desires in a location.

“I’m proud of the work being done on every level of government from state, to county, to city, to ensure that Alabama and Auburn continue to be as business-friendly as possible. I’m proud to welcome Kemmerich to the Auburn family.”

Christoph Sanders, consul general of the Federal Republic of Germany in Atlanta, said Auburn offers an infrastructure ideal for an international company to become part of.

“Auburn is really a place where I learned, as the German consul to the area here, that is really a good home to German companies, and also to other U.N. and international companies, as I have seen,” Sanders said. “When you have these industrial parks and industrial sites, together with the university, it’s really a lot of things coming together to make such investments possible.”

+++

Medical college breaks ground in Auburn

Opelika-Auburn News

February 6, 2014

Kristen Oliver

Officials and supporters of a new medical college at the Auburn Research Park at Auburn University broke ground on the project Thursday.

The Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM) facility will be a state-of-the-art, four story building with more than 90,000 square feet adjacent to Auburn University’s main campus. Osteopathic physicians are licensed across the U.S. to practice the full scope of medicine, according to VCOM. They emphasize the body’s ability to heal itself, and therefore focus on disease prevention and nutrition.

VCOM has campuses in Blacksburg, Va. with Virginia Tech and in Spartanburg, S.C. with Wofford College. The Auburn campus will be its third.

The ground-breaking ceremony Thursday was attended by local and state leaders.

“When you look at what the college of osteopathic medicine is going to bring to us, it’ll be an opportunity for students, faculty and the public and private sector in all walks to work collaboratively at Auburn University,” said Dr. John Mason, president of Auburn Research and Technology Foundation.

Mason said health science is one of Auburn’s many interdisciplinary initiatives, so the entire campus can interact with and benefit from the new college.

Dr. Jay Gogue, president of Auburn University, believes adding another medical college in Alabama will help bring much-needed doctors to the state.

“I’m not an expert at all in health science or in the medical field, but I want you to think about in Alabama every day, the number that shocks me, 61 of the 67 counties are without the appropriate number of doctors,” Gogue said. “... VCOM offers an enormous opportunity in the state of Alabama to help our people. As a land-grant university, it’s absolutely critical that we have a responsibility to the people in our state and beyond.

“This is a dream of ours that we at Auburn could not do. It’s only through a private partner that allows us to provide the kind of interaction and service that we know is important.”

The Auburn Research and Technology Foundation, Auburn University and VCOM first signed the collaborative agreement to establish the college in 2012. VCOM is building the facility, which will allow for collaborations with Auburn University programs and Alabama hospitals. The college is scheduled to admit its first class in 2015.

Dr. James Wolfe, president of Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine, also spoke Thursday about the possibilities the partnership will create.

“I want to emphasize two major things,” Wolfe said. “First, how grateful we are for this association with Auburn and the opportunities it provides for both partners, and secondly, how this branch campus will assist in our mission by meeting the growing need for physicians in Alabama and the surrounding rural and underserved areas.”

Wolfe said he looks forward to the economic benefits and healthcare improvements the college can provide the state.

“We will be preparing doctors who will play a major role in satisfying what I personally think to be a moral imperative of this country,” Wolfe said. “In my mind, that moral imperative is the provision of healthcare for all of our citizens, no exceptions, no excuses.”

+++

Tracking the 2014 session: Summary of action in the Alabama Legislature

The Associated Press
February 6, 2014

MONTGOMERY, Alabama — A summary of action in the Alabama Legislature on Thursday, the 11th meeting day of the regular session:

HOUSE:

— Approved a bill to give deployed military members extra time to renew their vehicle registration. Goes to Senate.

— Approved a bill to specify that write-in votes will only be counted if there are enough votes to impact the race, or if there is a request. Goes to Senate.

SENATE:

-- Approved a House bill to allow cities in Jefferson County to issue car tags to help alleviate long lines at the Jefferson County Courthouse. Goes to governor.

— Passed a bill to allow state agencies to purchase personal property from vendors not on statewide contract, if the purchase price is at least 10 percent less than the statewide contract. Goes to House.

—Joined with the House for a joint session honoring members of the military.

AGENDA:

— House meets at 1p.m. Tuesday and Senate at 2 p.m.

+++

Legislature passes bill to allow Jefferson County cities to issue car tags (video)

Al.com

February 6, 2014

Kyle Whitmire

A bill that would allow municipalities in Jefferson County to issue car tags for the county has gone to Gov. Robert Bentley for approval after passing the second house in the Alabama Legislature Thursday.

If Bentley signs the bill into law, cities could choose to issue license plates for the county, adding as much as a \$5 service fee to recoup their costs.

Rep. Paul DeMarco, R-Homewood, said that about a dozen cities have expressed interest in such a program.

Since Jefferson County lost its occupational tax after a years-long court battle, the county has struggled to staff its revenue office with enough personnel to handle car tags and lines have often stretched out of the courthouse and into Linn Park.

"This should reduce the lines, so it should be a win for everybody in Jefferson County," DeMarco said.

+++

More students moving to private schools with Alabama Accountability Act scholarships

The Associated Press

February 6, 2014

MONTGOMERY, Alabama — More students are moving from public to private schools with the help of scholarships provided by groups that were able to raise the maximum amount of money allowed by Alabama law.

The leader of one of the most successful scholarship groups said the number of students taking advantage of the Alabama Accountability Act has swelled in the second semester because of more donations. Birmingham lawyer Jenny McCain, president of Scholarships for Kids, cited 16 students who recently enrolled at Churchill Academy in Montgomery using scholarships from her group.

She said the students' parents had wanted to transfer them from public schools — some rated as failing and some not — but they didn't have the money for the private school that helps students with special needs. "The only reason they are able to be at the school is the Alabama Accountability Act," she said in an interview.

The Legislature passed the Alabama Accountability Act in February 2013, and it kicked in with the fall semester. It allows students in the 78 public schools rated as failing by the state Department of Education to move to any non-failing school or to a participating private school. It provides parents with a \$3,500 annual tax credit to help cover their costs.

The law also allows the creation of scholarship organizations to award scholarships to children to attend private school. Until Sept. 15 of each year, the scholarships are targeted for children leaving failing public schools. After that, money can go to parents making less than 150 percent of the median household income, no matter where their children have been enrolled. That figure is about \$62,000.

The law gave businesses and individuals a 100 percent tax credit for donations to the scholarship organizations, and it capped the tax credits at \$25 million per year. The state Revenue Department reports business and individuals committed the \$25 million limit for 2013.

Scholarships for Kids reported raising \$6.3 million in 2013. McCain said donations picked up after school started and more people learned about the law. She predicts her organization will

have 700 to 1,000 students on scholarships by May. She said about 80 percent of them would likely qualify under the low-income provision.

An attorney for the Alabama Education Association, which is challenging the law in court, said it's deceptive to describe the money raised as contributions because the donors get every dollar back through the tax credits. "There is no philanthropy," Bobby Segall said.

For the fall semester, the state Department of Education reported 52 students left failing public schools to attend private schools under the Alabama Accountability Act. Figures aren't available for the spring semester, but supporters of the law expect a dramatic growth for the 2014-2015 school year.

"I have schools calling me every week," McCain said.

But first, the law has to get past legal challenges.

A federal judge heard arguments Tuesday in a lawsuit filed by the Southern Poverty Law Center, and a state court judge heard arguments Thursday in a lawsuit filed by AEA, the state teachers' organization.

Montgomery Circuit Judge Gene Reese gave attorneys two weeks to submit proposed orders and said he will rule afterward.

AEA's attorneys said the state Constitution allows only one subject in a bill, while the Accountability Act has two subjects. They said one subject gives public schools flexibility in complying with state regulations, and the other provides tax credits to parents moving children from failing public schools to private schools.

An assistant state attorney general, Will Parker, argued the bill has only one subject.

"All the provisions in the act relate to education," he said.

+++

Supporters gather at AL State House to protect coal industry jobs

WSFA

February 6, 2014

MONTGOMERY, AL (WSFA) -

The Alabama Coal Association and United Mine Workers of America are announcing a new initiative to go up against those who they say want to destroy coal jobs in Alabama.

Dozens of miners and their supporters from all over the state traveled to the Alabama State House Thursday morning.

Among those in attendance were Alabama state senator Greg Reed and state representative Bill Roberts.

The meeting's key goal is to protect and promote Alabama jobs within the coal industry.

"The EPA is trying to limit what we do and basically phase out the coal mining industry," says John Box, a coal miner from Tuscaloosa. "I'm a 3rd generation coal miner," he adds. "We've been benefiting this country for well over 100 years. We have to make sure our jobs don't get phased out in the meantime."

Organizers argue that legislation backed by Public Service Commissioner Terry Dunn could affect nearly 16,000 families in Alabama.

+++

Qualifying deadline for Democrats, Republicans

The Associated Press

February 7, 2014

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — The field for Alabama's elections will become clearer by the end of the day.

Friday is the deadline for Democratic and Republican candidates to sign up with their parties to participate in the primary elections June 3. Both party headquarters are set up to process a rush of candidates on the final day.

The deadline for candidates has traditionally been in April, but it got moved up this year. The earlier deadline is part of the state's settlement with the U.S. Justice Department to make sure the military and other Alabamians living overseas have plenty of time to get and return absentee ballots.

Independent candidates have until June 3 to submit the voter signatures needed to run in the general election.

+++

State Sen. Billy Beasley running for re-election to Senate, rather than for governor

Al.com

February 6, 2014

Mike Cason

MONTGOMERY, Alabama --

State Sen. Billy Beasley of Clayton announced today he would run for re-election to the Alabama Senate rather than for governor.

Beasley said he thought the people in his Senate district need him and he wants to continue to serve them. He said it was a difficult decision that came after talking with his family and those who had encouraged him to run. He said he did not make up his mind until Wednesday afternoon.

"If I was campaigning all across the state, I'd be away from my wife too much," Beasley said.

Beasley, 73, is a pharmacist and is serving his fourth term in the Legislature. He is the brother of former Lt. Gov. Jere Beasley.

Beasley would have become the second candidate for the Democratic nomination in the June 3 primary. Kevin Bass of Fayette announced his candidacy in December.

Former Congressman Parker Griffith of Huntsville has said he was considering a run, but would probably not seek the office if Beasley decided to run.

On the Republican side, Gov. Robert Bentley is running for re-election and has two Republican challengers so far – Stacy Lee George of Morgan County and Bob Starkey of Scottsboro.

+++

From the courthouse to the State House: Attorney Gayle Gear running for open Dist. 17 state senate seat

Al.com

February 6, 2014

Joseph D. Bryant

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama -- Attorney Gayle Gear has qualified as a candidate for the District 17 State Senate seat.

Gear filed as a Republican, seeking the post being vacated by Republican Scott Beason, who is not seeking reelection. Gear is a resident of Gardendale.

"I think it's important at this time," Gear said about her decision to run. "I'm excited about it. Many people have asked me through the years, 'Why are you not in Montgomery?'"

District 17 includes parts of Jefferson, Blount and St. Clair Counties.

Gear, who practices in downtown Birmingham, said her daily job involves speaking out and protecting the rights of clients. Running for elected office is a similar task on a larger stage, she explained.

"I think I can do that. I think I have a duty to try," she said.

Gear said she intends to improve public trust in elected officials by enhancing communication and bringing more civility to the State House.

"Alabamians want to trust their government, but they also want their government to trust them," she said. "I am here in Gardendale, Alabama and I see the need for somebody to point this out."

In contrast to partisan fights on the state and national levels, Gear said most people want their government to provide basic services and create an environment for them to make their own way.

"They don't want an environment for people to take care of them, they want an environment where they can take care of themselves," Gear said. "We all have the same goal. We just need to step aside from the partisan bickering."

+++

Joe Hubbard will challenge Luther Strange for attorney general

Montgomery Advertiser

February 6, 2014

Kala Kachmar

Rep. Joe Hubbard announced that he will run against Republican Attorney General Luther Strange in the election later this year.

Hubbard, a Democrat, has represented District 73 in Montgomery since 2011.

"The reality is that when I first ran for the House, I wasn't running for a lifetime seat," he said. "I feel there's a greater need out there and I need to go beyond the people of Montgomery."

Many expected Hubbard to run against Rep. Dimitri Polizos, R-Montgomery, who recently won a special election in his district after former Rep. Jay Love resigned.

When districts were redrawn after the 2010 Census, Hubbard's district was eliminated.

Hubbard said all his House campaign funds that have been raised will be transferred to his campaign to run for attorney general.

"I believe that hard work, a good message and the right messenger can compete with money any day," Hubbard said, adding that Strange has access to "infinite pots of special interest money."

According to campaign finance reports, Strange has about \$1.1 million for his campaign, and Hubbard has about \$75,000.

Hubbard, an attorney, said Strange has been largely absent as an attorney general in the past four years. He said Strange hasn't properly addressed consumer protection, problems with crime and public corruption.

"We can't ignore (these problems) any longer," Hubbard said. "As attorney general, I'm going to take a stand on these issues and I'm not going to back down."

Hubbard also attacked Strange for his ties to businesses during his time as a lobbyist.

“Either way, he’s not there when the people of Alabama need him,” Hubbard said. “They need an attorney general that will show up and do the job.”

An attempt was made to reach Strange, but he did not respond to the Advertiser’s a request for comment before deadline.

Hubbard said one of his goals is to help district attorneys prosecute criminals. Violent crime in Montgomery is rising, and he said that’s just a mirror of what’s going on all over the state.

He also said Strange is focusing too much effort on electronic gaming and not enough on issues that are affecting people’s lives every day, such as drug addiction, crimes and public corruption.

“Rather than sending all our law enforcement muscle to shut down the Poarch Creek on sovereign land, we need to send our law enforcement to places that need it,” Hubbard said.

Hubbard, when asked if he had a chance against a Republican, said he’s lined up in the House to fight Democrats and Republicans when they’re wrong, and has also supported both parties. He said what’s most important is that he’s not running “on behalf of any political party or special interest.”

House Minority Leader Craig Ford said he’ll hate to see Hubbard leave the House because he’s a great representative.

“He cares about public education and the people in this state,” Ford said. “He felt it was best for him and his political endeavors to run. We support Joe in whatever he tries to achieve.”

Ford said Democrats are in the process of finding someone to run against Polizos. in District 74.

+++

Retired Air Force Col. Hobbie Sealy of Montgomery seeks GOP nomination for state auditor

The Associated Press

February 6, 2014

MONTGOMERY, Alabama — The Republican field for state auditor has grown to three candidates.

Retired Air Force Col. Hobbie Sealy of Montgomery announced he is running in the GOP primary on June 3.

Sealy was assistant state conservation commissioner under former Gov. Bob Riley. Before that, he spent 21 years with the Air Force and was director of marketing for the United States Automobile Association.

Sealy has an accounting degree from the University of Tennessee. Sealy says he has the professional experience and management skills to be auditor.

He joins two other Republican candidates, Anniston attorney Ray Bryan and Adam Thompson, who works in the secretary of state's office. Miranda Joseph of Birmingham is running as a Democrat.

The current auditor, Republican Samantha Shaw, is not running this year.

+++

Bob Starkey of Scottsboro joins race for Republican nomination for governor

Al.com

February 6, 2014

Mike Cason

MONTGOMERY, Alabama --- Bob Starkey of Scottsboro has qualified to seek the Republican nomination for governor.

Starkey, 67, joins Gov. Robert Bentley and Stacy Lee George in the June 3 primary.

Starkey is an Auburn University graduate who ran his own software company for more than 30 years before retiring last year.

He said his business focused on helping other businesses become more efficient, and he wants to apply the same effort to state government.

“I think I have a lot to offer trying to redo the business side of state government,” Starkey said. “I think there’s an incredible amount of inefficiency that could be automated to reduce the cost of government.”

Asked about the difficulty of taking on an incumbent governor who is raising a lot of campaign money, Starkey said that hopes his candidacy will generate productive debate.

“I think I have a real chance to put some ideas on the table,” he said.

Starkey ran as a write-in candidate in for District 23 in the state House of Representatives in 2010. He came in third in the race for mayor of Scottsboro in 2012.

+++

UCF's Waldrop named president at South Alabama

The Associated Press
February 6, 2014

MOBILE, Ala. (AP) — An administrator from the University of Central Florida has been named president of the University of South Alabama in Mobile.

Trustees unanimously selected Tony G. Waldrop as president during a meeting Thursday.

Waldrop is provost and executive vice president at Central Florida, which is located in Orlando. He also held administrative positions at the University of North Carolina and the University of Illinois.

At South Alabama, Waldrop replaces the late Gordon Moulton, who retired last July 1 and died in September.

A statement from South Alabama says Waldrop was selected from an initial field of more than 130 candidates. He will start at South Alabama in April.

South Alabama has an enrollment of about 15,300 students.

+++

Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore writes all 50 governors pushing amendment to ban gay marriage

The Associated Press
February 6, 2014

MONTGOMERY, Alabama — Alabama's chief justice, known on the national stage for fighting to display the Ten Commandments in a judicial building, is jumping into the gay marriage debate with his push for a states-led constitutional amendment defining the institution as a union between one man and one woman.

"The moral foundation of our country is under attack," Chief Justice Roy Moore said in an interview with The Associated Press.

He mailed letters Wednesday to all 50 governors urging them to get their legislatures to call for a convention to add an amendment to the U.S. Constitution saying the only union recognized by state and federal governments is "the union of one man and one woman." He also is setting up a website to rally public support.

Moore said the only way to stop judges who are finding new rights for gay unions is with a state-initiated constitutional amendment. "Government has become oppressive, and judges are warping the law," Moore said.

Seventeen states and the District of Columbia allow gay marriage. None is in the South, where every state has enacted a ban on same-sex marriage. In Virginia, a federal judge heard arguments

this week on a lawsuit challenging the state's ban. Virginia's attorney general chose not to defend the law because he said it violates the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment.

In Alabama, an openly gay state legislator who married her partner in Massachusetts said she expects most governors to toss Moore's letter.

"He's fighting a losing battle, and he probably knows that," Rep. Patricia Todd, D-Birmingham, said in an interview.

She said the chief justice should recognize Americans' view and the courts' views about the issue and how it has changed in recent years. "Get over it, buddy," Todd said.

But Moore said that "a great majority of the American people want to hold to the definition that a marriage is between a man and a woman," though he acknowledged an amendment would draw opposition from both sides of the political spectrum. Conservative political analyst Phyllis Schlafly has said a state-initiated convention would be "a prescription for political chaos, controversy and confrontation."

In the past, U.S. legislators have introduced federal marriage amendments, but Moore said he doesn't think Congress will offer one this year. The only alternative, he said, is going through Article V of the Constitution to get 34 states to agree that a convention is necessary.

An Article V convention has never been held, but Moore said, "I think the time is ripe for that to happen with the political atmosphere in Congress. They can't get along or agree on anything."

A lawyer with the American Civil Liberties Union said the 17 states that allow gay marriage aren't likely to reverse their positions and call for a constitutional amendment. "I think the chief justice has a math problem ahead of him," said James Esseks, director of the ACLU's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Project.

Alabama Gov. Robert Bentley said he has no problem with what the chief justice is proposing, but his preference is leaving the issue to the people of each state.

"I am a states' rights person. Marriage licenses are issued by the state. I do believe that most things should be left on a state level," he said.

When Moore was elected in 2000, he placed a granite monument of the Ten Commandments in the state judicial building. A federal judge ruled that it had to be moved. Moore refused, and a state judicial court kicked him out of office in 2003 for disobeying the court order. Moore became known as "Alabama's Ten Commandments judge" as he traveled the country speaking to churches and conservative groups. Alabama voters re-elected him in 2012. He has not tried to bring the monument back.

Alabama's nine high court justices don't usually get involved in national issues, but Moore said it is appropriate for him to speak out because Alabama has a state constitutional amendment that

recognizes a marriage as a union only between a man and a woman. "Basically, I'm upholding the law," he said.

Others say attitudes have changed in Alabama since the law's enactment. Last year, the leader of the College Republican Federation of Alabama supported the U.S. Supreme Court's decision overturning the Defense of Marriage Act. That upset the state Republican Party chairman, who proposed a rule change aimed at keeping party leaders from taking public positions contrary to party policy. The state GOP executive committee wouldn't approve it.

"That is a great example of where the country is moving," Esseks said.