

# MAYNARD

## COOPER GALE

### 2022 Legislative Update: Regular Session Resumes for Week Three

#### Overview

Alabama legislators returned to Montgomery after a two week Special Legislative Session for the third week of the 2022 Regular Legislative Session. It was a busy week for legislators. Normally legislative session days are limited to Tuesdays and Thursdays but this week both chambers considered and acted on legislation over three consecutive days. Additionally, multiple committee meetings were held throughout the week. In all lawmakers introduced over 150 new bills and worked on multiple pieces of legislation previously introduced.

#### Education

There were several education related measures considered in the legislature during week three including proposals related to school choice, policy and improving student performance in the classroom.

A bill entitled the Parent's Choice Act was introduced which, if passed, will provide for the creating, funding and utilizing education savings accounts for eligible public school students in kindergarten through grade twelve and eligible home schooled students. Under the Act parents would have options to choose individual education needs for a participating student. Parents will be provided funds equal to 100% of the State's share of educating a public school student to use for tuition, fees and other qualified educational expenses.

The Alabama Numeracy Act was introduced and is a proposal to improve mathematic instruction in public schools in general and specifically provide a means for increasing grade level proficiency in math for students in kindergarten through the fifth grade. In addition to improving curriculum and the way math is taught the legislation provides for the creation of the Office of Mathematics Improvement within the State Department of Education and an Elementary Mathematics Task Force and a Postsecondary Mathematics Task Force. In addition to creating new policy, the legislation also provides for intervention by the state if necessary and the establishment of special programs to address the needs of students.

The Alabama Literacy Act was passed in 2019 as an effort to address poor reading levels for grade school students. A significant provision of the Act called for third graders to test at grade level in order to be promoted to the fourth grade. Since the onset of the pandemic lawmakers have debated whether the grade retention requirement needed to be delayed after reports of the problems related to school closures and remote learning. According to the State Superintendent of Education more than one-half of State's third graders at many schools are at risk of being held back if the requirement is not delayed. This week approximately one-third of the members of the House of Representatives co-sponsored a bill to delay the requirement.

#### Guns

Several bills related to guns and the right to carry them remain to be hot legislative items and on Tuesday law enforcement officers from every corner of the State came to Montgomery to voice their opinions. Several sheriffs, police chiefs and officers and other members of the law enforcement community spoke outside of the Statehouse, in committee meetings and directly with legislators regarding their strong opposition to repealing the State's concealed carry permit requirement. Under several current proposals

Alabama citizens will be able to purchase guns and to carry them and have them in personal vehicles without having to purchase a permit.

The business community also chimed in on the proposals to repeal concealed carry permits. Many business leaders made sure lawmakers understood their interests in being able to prohibit guns on private property and places of business and employment. Lawmakers have indicated a willingness to allow for restrictions and another bill to include the concerns is expected to be considered in the Senate.

### **Medical Cannabis Commission**

The Senate confirmed thirteen members of the Medical Cannabis Commission. Confirmed were Sam Blakemore, Dwight Gamble, Eric Jenson, B. James Harwell, Taylor Hatchett, Angela Martin, Charles Price, Dion Robinson, William Saliski, Loree Skelton, Steven Stokes, Jerzey Szaflarski and Rex Vaughn. One other appointment was carried over.

### **Alabama Households Save \$88,000,000**

The Senate passed a bill that would exempt state income taxes for Alabamian families who received increases in child tax credits, earned income tax credits and dependent care tax credits in 2021. According to estimates this measure saves Alabamians approximately \$88,000,000 in taxes that would be owed as a result of receiving certain federal tax benefits under the American Rescue Plan Act.

### **Congressional Redistricting**

On January 24th a federal three-judge panel issued a ruling directing lawmakers to produce a plan to provide for two congressional districts in which black voters comprise a voting-age majority by February 11th. The current plan which provides for only one of the seven congressional districts to be majority black was developed by legislators last year. In a new ruling on yesterday the federal judges informed Alabama lawmakers that they are preparing to hire a special master and an expert cartographer to draw a new plan if the legislature does not act immediately. The Alabama Attorney General's office has filed an appeal contesting the original ruling and has requested that it be stayed during the appellate process. The request for the stay has not been ruled on.

### **Statistics**

Through six legislative days, legislators have introduced 463 bills - 274 in the House and 189 in the Senate.

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