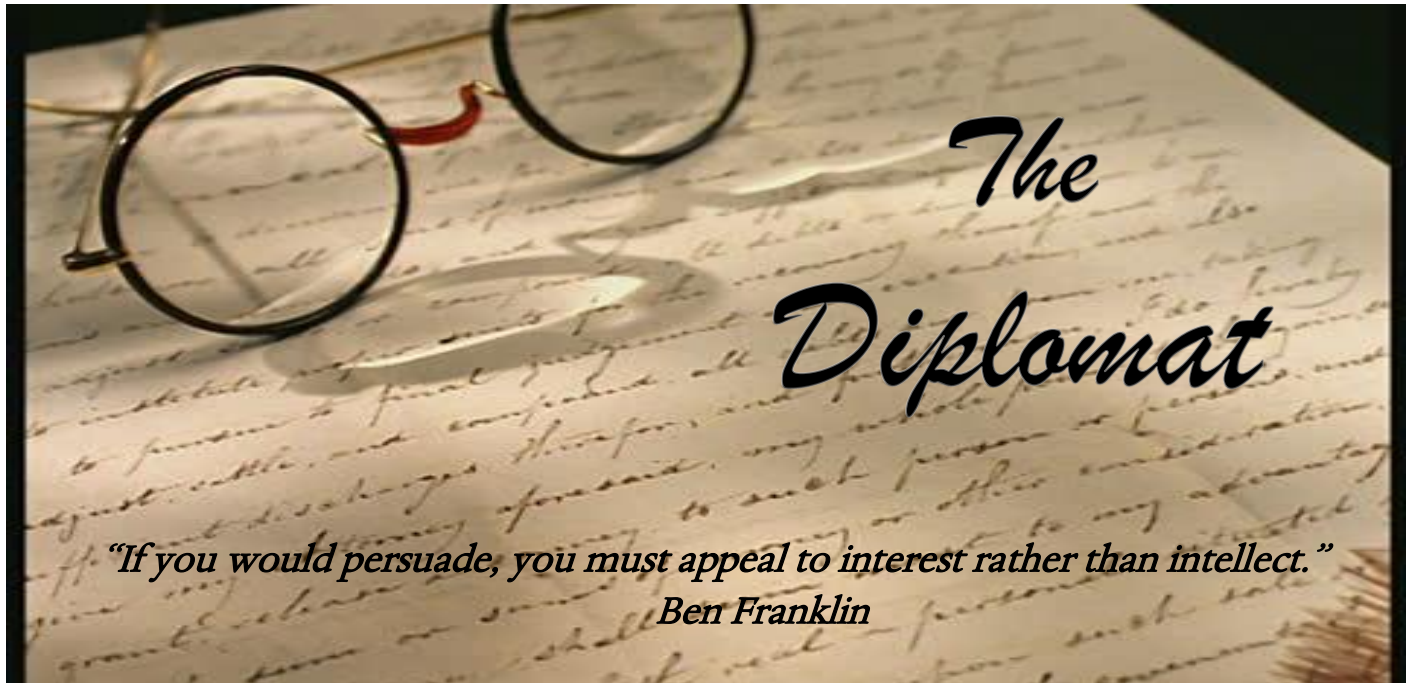


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"If you would persuade, you must appeal to interest rather than intellect."

Ben Franklin

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2021 Regular Legislative Session Convenes

Tuesday, February 2, 2021

Our weekly newsletters will resume soon.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

2021 Session: It's Here

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LEGISLATIVE UPDATE
2021 Session: It's Here

Tuesday is the start of the 2021 Regular Legislative Session. Ironically, it is also Groundhog Day. Both the Legislature and the groundhog will be poking their heads out to see what happens. The plan is to meet at the State House for six legislative days over the next two weeks before taking a break for a week, possibly longer, to see where they stand with the virus.

The House and Senate will both offer live streaming video from their chambers and committee rooms. Walk-through temperature scanners have been installed at all the public entrances and on the seventh floor leading to the Senate. Access will be restricted without a scheduled appointment.

Seven of the 33 state senators (two seats are currently vacant) have suffered from COVID-19. At least three were hospitalized, including Sen. Randy Price of Opelika, who was ventilated and once had to be revived. Fortunately, he has since recovered. Others include State Sens. Garlan Gudger of Cullman, Jim McClendon of Springville, Donnie Chesteen of Geneva, Tom Whatley of Auburn, Billy Beasley of Clayton, and David Sessions of Grand Bay. Several House members have had the virus, and some were hospitalized.

There are several pressing issues members want to get taken care of, besides the budgets, which are the only constitutionally required acts of the Legislature. In the first two weeks, the Legislature plans to take up bills to provide businesses and nonprofits with liability coverage pertaining to COVID-19, renew tax credits and rebates that expired last year to help recruit industries, and exempt taxpayers from state income tax on COVID relief payments.

Sen. Del Marsh of Anniston hopes gaming and rural broadband internet access will be addressed during this legislative session, but a lot will depend on the Legislature's mood, its willingness to tackle these two heavy lifts at this time, and what effects the virus will have on the session. There will also likely be another strong push for medical marijuana.

Republican Ben Robbins, an attorney from Sylacauga, will be the newest member of the Alabama Legislature. Robbins won a special general election in House District 33, formally held by Rep. Ron Johnson, who died in July.