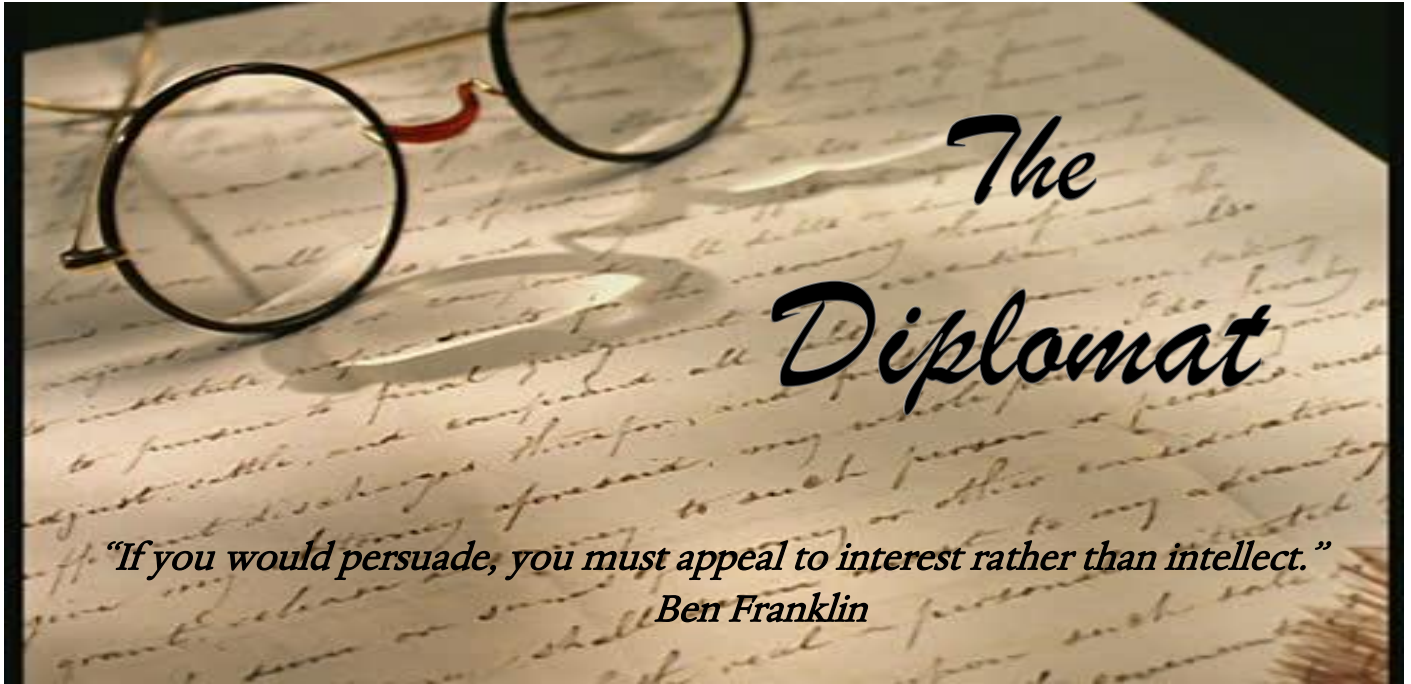


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## THE LEGISLATURE

### COVID-19

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## THE LEGISLATURE COVID-19

Both the House and the Senate convened Tuesday for what can only be described as a very unusual 14th Legislative Day. Twenty Senators and 58 House members, enough to conduct business, answered the roll. Precautions taken at the Statehouse included checking temperatures, restricting who was allowed in the building and practicing social distance during the quick meetings to consider some procedural issues. Easily passing both chambers was a joint rule allowing for postponement of a legislative session under a state of emergency, which we are now, so as not to burn legislative days were they be unable to get a quorum. The House already had such a mechanism in place, but the Senate did not.

The Legislature has 16 meeting days remaining and has ambitious plans to return April 28<sup>th</sup>. The last possible day to meet this session is May 18<sup>th</sup>. Senate leadership is hoping to have four and five-day weeks in hopes of salvaging the remainder of the session. Others would consider that to be highly optimistic, especially with most recent information showing the COVID-19 virus not peaking in Alabama for several more weeks.

The primary responsibility of the Legislature each session is to pass the General Fund and Education Trust Fund Budgets for the following year, which begins on October 1. We still don't know the breadth of COVID-19's impact on our state's economy, and likely will not for several months, other than it will not be good.

Many still doubt the Legislature will be able to pass both budgets before June and that they will probably delay passing a General Fund Budget for 2021 until later in the Summer when there is a better idea of the State's finances. This can be done by the Governor calling a Special Session. The Education Budget is a little trickier because school systems need to know next year's finances to make hiring decisions and such, so it is possible that some resemblance of a budget passes knowing they can come back and make needed adjustments.

"Both budgets will be bare-bones," said Sen. Pro Tem Marsh " With the uncertainty in the economy at this point, we can't justify any kind of pay raises, or any commitments of revenues until we see what's happening with this economy." Marsh also said, "We fully expect to pass the budgets in this legislative session," but others aren't so sure.