

**Volume 7 - May 3, 2019**



# The Diplomat

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

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## **IN COMMITTEE**

**This Week**

**House Reconvenes  
Tuesday, May 7 - 1:00 p.m.**

**Senate Reconvenes  
Tuesday, May 7 - 3:30 p.m.**

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**THE SENATE**  
**Education Budget**

The Senate Finance & Taxation Education Committee approved the Education budget Tuesday afternoon where it was in position to be debated by the full Senate Thursday. The Senate passed SB321 (a constitutional amendment) by Sen. Bobby Singleton (D-Greensboro) aimed at protecting electronic bingo at GreeneTrack in Green County. The vote was 21-0, the minimum number of votes needed to pass a constitutional amendment.

Thursday, the Senate quickly concurred with House changes to SB228 by Sen. Arthur Orr (R-Decatur) that would end the practice of sheriffs pocketing excess food money. It now goes to the Governor for her consideration.

The \$7.1 billion Education Budget was before the full Senate Thursday. Included in this version is an almost 30 percent increase for Alabama's pre-K program, which would allow almost 40 percent of all four-year-olds to attend the voluntary program. It also includes a 4 percent teacher pay raise and a minimum 5 percent increase for higher education institutions. Community Colleges were big winners receiving a 10 percent increase in funding. It passed 30-0. Overall, the Senate-passed Education Budget is a 7 percent increase over the current year's budget. It now goes to the House for consideration.

**THE HOUSE**  
**Abortion**

Most House Democrats walked off the House floor shortly before passage of HB314 by Rep. Terri Collins (R-Decatur). This bill would make it a class A felony for a doctor to perform an abortion in Alabama, except in situations where there is a serious risk to the mother's health. The legislation passed 74-3. Most of the House Democrats walked off the House floor in protest after an amendment which would have allowed exceptions for rape or incest failed, 26-72.

The bill now goes to the Senate for consideration. It is expected to be in committee Tuesday with a possible full Senate vote by Thursday. If passed in its current form, the legislation would be the strictest in the nation. According to supporters, the purpose of the legislation is to challenge the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Roe v. Wade*.

Thursday, the House passed HB400 by Rep. Randall Shedd (R-Cullman) following an almost 3-hour debate. It would authorize the placement, installation, operation and use of broadband within electric easements by electric providers. It would also allow electric providers to provide broadband services through advanced communications capabilities within electric easement.

Also passing Thursday, were fifteen other bills including HB312 by Prince Chestnut (D-Selma) making it a criminal assault in the second degree if intending to cause physical injury to a working journalist.

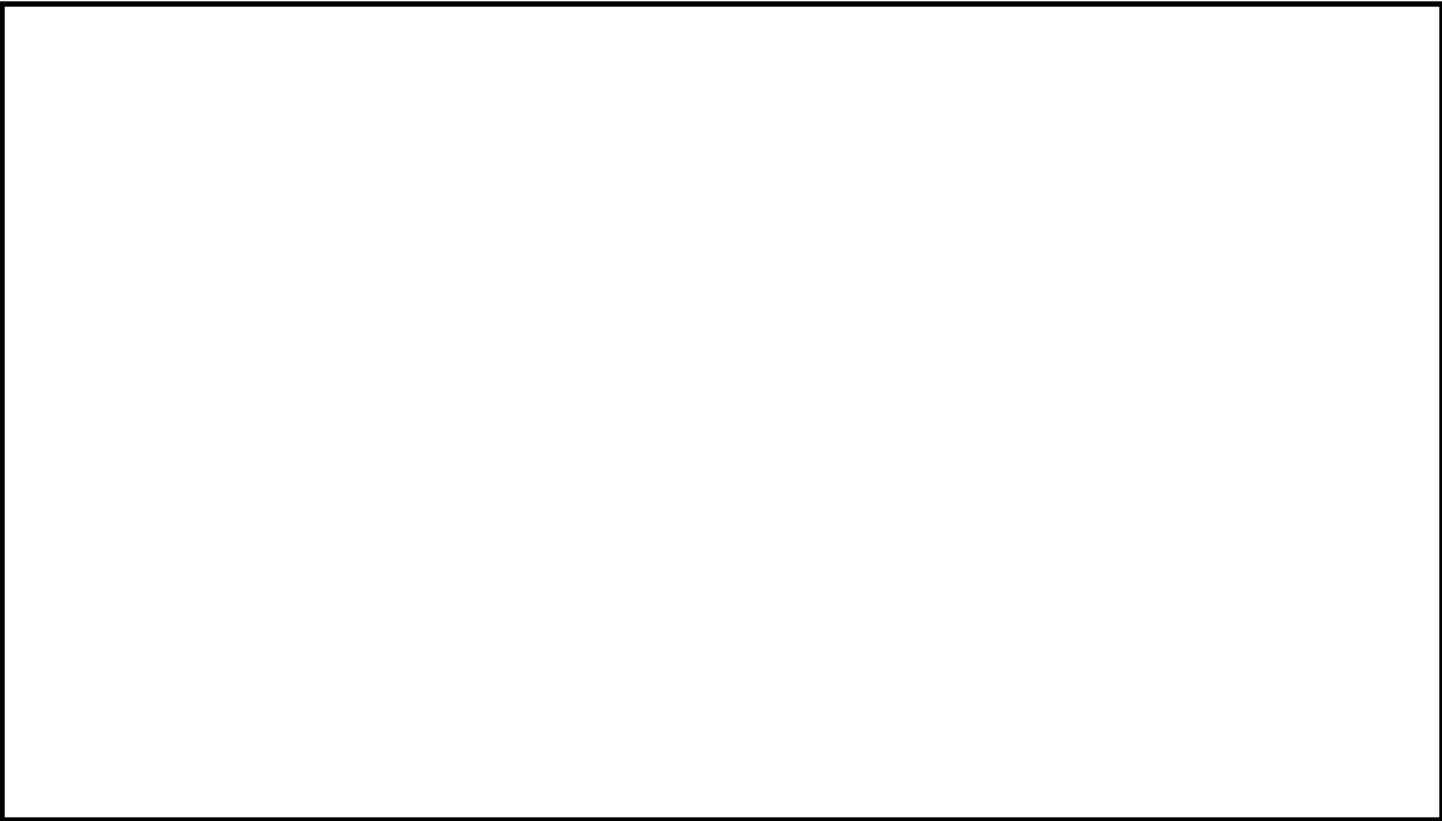
**PRISONS****Time's running out**

Thursday, marked day 15 of the 2019 Regular Legislative Session. A regular session is limited to 30 meeting days within a 105 calendar day period. This year the legislature is not expected to use all 30 days. Plans at this time are to adjourn Sine Die before the Memorial day weekend. This would be weeks before June 17<sup>th</sup>, the last possible meeting day.

One big item that has not been debated this session is prison reform, specifically sentencing reform and construction legislation. A rare bipartisan conversation is going on between a group of House and Senate members who see an opportunity to fix this in a positive manner. However, they realize there is not enough time in the current session so there are hopes to have a comprehensive package of legislation for a Fall Special Session. This is assuming the wheels do not come off beforehand.

**IN COMMITTEE****This Week**

- **SB90** by Sen. Clay Scofield received a favorable report from the Senate Fiscal Responsibility & Economic Development Committee. It amends the Alabama Broadband Accessibility Act (Act 2018-395) to increase, by 2% for a total of 5%, the amount of appropriated funds the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) may utilize to administer the program and require ADECA to report annually to the Alabama Rural Broadband Oversight Committee on the status of grants under the program.
- **SB155** by Sen. Cam Ward was carried over by the sponsor in the Senate Judiciary Committee this week. The bill, among other things, proposes to expand early interventions to address the need of certain youth prior to court involvement, require development of a statewide detention risk assessment tool for pre-adjudication detention decisions, and provide for a risk and needs assessment tool to aid courts in determining placement in the custody in the Alabama Department of Youth Services. It also creates a 17-member Juvenile Justice Oversight Committee to oversee the implementation of the changes made by the bill.
- **HB350** by Rep. Terri Collins which allows up to 24 cases of wine per year to be shipped directly to an Alabama resident over the age of 21, was approved by the House Commerce & Small Business Committee.
- **HB384** by Rep. Jim Carns and **SB309** by Sen. Jabo Waggoner relating to the General Retirement System for Employees of Jefferson County, received a favorable report from the Senate Jefferson County Local Legislation Committee.
- **HB422** by Rep. Pebblin Warren was approved by the House Economic Development and Tourism Committee. The local constitutional amendment is aimed to protect electronic bingo at Victoryland in Macon County.



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