**Alabama Legislative Report**

**February 16, 2024**

**House Approves Gaming, Lottery Legislation**

By a 70-32 vote, the House of Representatives passed a constitutional amendment allowing for casino gaming, lottery, and sports betting in Alabama, well exceeding the required 63 votes needed for passage. The House also voted 67-31 to approve legislation establishing the Alabama Gaming Commission and outlining the oversight and accountability process for gaming in the state.

The proposal authorizes the Alabama Gaming Commission to issue up to seven casinos – one in each of the following counties: Jefferson, Greene, Macon, Mobile, Lowndes and Houston. One additional location could be added in Northeast Alabama, either Dekalb or Jackson County, for the Porch Bank of Creek Indians contingent upon the tribe negotiating a compact with the state. The compact would levy taxes that are currently not paid by the tribe in return for table games and other casino games that the tribe does not currently offer at its existing facilities.

The Legislative Services Agency estimated that, once fully implemented, the gaming and lottery package would generate approximately $900 million for the state. As discussed last week, the enabling legislation directs the Legislature to spend the gaming money on healthcare, rainy day funds, mental health programs due to gambling addiction, two-year scholarships, and other educational support programs, but does not mandate any funding level, leaving those decisions up to the Legislature on an annual basis.

The legislation now moves to the Senate. If passed by both chambers, Alabamians will vote on the proposed constitutional amendment during the November 2024 general election.

**School Choice Bill Under Consideration**

The Senate Finance and Taxation Education Committee held a public hearing on SB61, the Creating Hope and Opportunity for Our Students’ Education (CHOOSE) Act. Sponsored by Senator Arthur Orr of Decatur, the proposal authorizes at least $100 million annually for parents to help offset home school and private school educations through a refundable income tax credit. Up to $7,000 per child would be made available starting in 2027 for all Alabama students who choose to participate. On Wednesday, members of the committee heard from Governor Ivey’s education policy advisor and groups on both sides of the issue.

Orr stated that a substitute for SB61 would be presented next week, and it includes some important changes. Notably Orr suggested an annual cap on the State’s allocation to ensure the fund does not continue to grow without demand and a requirement that private schools publicly share cumulative information about students’ scores under whatever testing measure they utilize to measure achievement.

HB129, the House companion bill, is on the Ways and Means Education Committee agenda next Thursday, February 22. It is sponsored by the committee’s chairman, Representative Danny Garrett.

**Libraries/Archives**

Issues that have been brewing both within the State and nationwide involving libraries, access to graphic books by minors, and funding of LGBTQ programs was met with the filing of two bills by Senator Chris Elliott of Baldwin County.

SB10 reforms the appointment of county and municipal library boards in the State. Current law allows the county commission or the governing body of the municipality to appoint library board members but provides no mechanism for removing them. SB10 lays out the ability for those governing bodies to now remove and replace library board members with a two-thirds vote and makes other technical changes.

SB77 reconstitutes how the Board of Trustees for the Department of Archives and History is appointed. Currently, the Board is self-perpetuating with the Board voting on their replacements, and those replacements are then either confirmed or rejected by the Senate. SB77 now makes all 18 members at-large, with the Governor to also serve, such that the new Board will serve at the pleasure of each appointing authority made up various State leaders including the Speaker, Lt. Governor, and Senate President Pro Tem. Elliott stated the bill’s purpose is to make sure there is accountability with the Board.

Both bills passed along party-line votes and are now pending in the House.

**Bills to Watch**

**Ad valorem increase cap – SB110**

Proposed by Senator David Sessions and co-sponsored by three-fourths of the Senate, this bill would cap the increase in assessed value of real property. Due to the increase in the values of most homeowners’ property recently, the shock of receiving ad valorem increases after county appraisals caused some homeowners’ tax bills to increase 10-15 percent in a single year. SB110 would limit the increase on residencies to no more than 3 percent in the assessed value of the property from the previous year’s assessed value. For businesses, the annual increase would be capped at no more than 5 percent a year. It does not apply to new construction, improvements made upon the property, and certain transfers.

**Healthcare Focused School – HB163/SB102**

These bills by Representative Cynthia Almond and Senate Minority Leader Bobby Singleton create the Alabama School of Healthcare Sciences in Demopolis. The school, championed by Governor Ivey, would establish an independent, state-wide, residential school for students motivated by STEMM (science, technology, engineering, math, and medicine) and in healthcare sciences. The proposed school is similar to specialized public schools already in existence like the Alabama School of Fine Arts, the Alabama High School of Mathematics and Science, and the Alabama School of Cyber Technology and Engineering. The purpose is to create more healthcare workers in the State, especially in rural areas that have been losing population.

**Tax Break on Feminine Products – SB62**

Senator Arthur Orr’s targeted tax cut for certain feminine products (baby formula, diapers, wipes, maternity clothing, and hygienic products) passed through committee this week and is set for the Senate passage. As originally written, the bill would have taken off all sales tax for the products, including county and municipal portions. An amendment by Senator Garlan Gudger was adopted that limits the sales tax cut to just the 4 percent State portion. As passed out of committee, the bill would cost the Education Trust Fund and State General Fund approximately $11 million annually.

EDAA

| **Bill** | **Sponsors** | **Title** | **Last Action** | **Latest Version** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| AL 2024rs [HB 133](https://url.emailprotection.link/?b6Blqo0CiWiYYrh45IxT1dn4O5dqcm7VwT2rI1--e4zvvYswU5LI2bF5bCh5P-pbZn4M0lneNl1pBBnkAYI-FkO7xfAE2q5JnjV1a7sbRGMgPB2S43rnButa0miQ0dyet) | [Rex Reynolds](https://url.emailprotection.link/?bolDdOGTgLxzb-dOYmCxYjShlYGy6cDM1tdiiPwjeB1WP9ZPeNSlhv65BbA3LMoPFo4b1K6FGhbb4ezewKDk5S43Sr0-gjVHo7Wk7QZYb_Zwkmogwj2uOXCOgvhe8dTBM) | Supplemental appropriations from State General Fund to specified agencies for fiscal year ending September 30, 2024. (Ways and Means General Fund) | House • Feb 07, 2024: Pending Committee Action In House Of Origin (Ways and Means General Fund) | [Introduced](https://url.emailprotection.link/?bRAms8OAMLehEd00A226qJkPxIy_PVL0g78anQx_i5kJlMkjHgxlsZ0qXoTadORY_GgFQIHVoSdY-BQ8c-QcRHGlSQb4sanrZOeGGGDQnzSrJmwo4YtUwJrCzZd_0wlQM) |
| AL 2024rs [SB 66](https://url.emailprotection.link/?bN2lGvCzNJWLIWQqGbE5IByoLJc8_uGCII5H0O0PA22CsqQh-dbX_24cOr329OBFR_yeQz80AStiCrUGmEwn__PlYuzNbmp3pstLPzlHjfiIh8ty0nYDmqAfUYEHRFtzC) | [Greg Albritton](https://url.emailprotection.link/?bolDdOGTgLxzb-dOYmCxYjShlYGy6cDM1tdiiPwjeB1WP9ZPeNSlhv65BbA3LMoPFzGZbQu47FDP7JJ2Ielp6VVMgnc-zOko6v6dMQiZmAE8ZLClWhvwc1IObaIMCTPov) | Supplemental appropriations from State General Fund to specified agencies for fiscal year ending September 30, 2024. (Finance and Taxation General Fund) | Senate • Feb 07, 2024: Pending Committee Action In House Of Origin (Finance and Taxation General Fund) | [Introduced](https://url.emailprotection.link/?bQA5DgjLKbyeK5BK4zNTiWZ1Ec3q2rGZauWGQhzO7nwd4IQxm3ePldTXvCnphrTLy4-AHms68eWboxWYTGTNis3MzrFHvTfaf0kKWHwgsMQoh9AH4IDsR_1xNZa8xkR7s) |
| AL 2024rs [HB 118](https://url.emailprotection.link/?bj_PUQEiIt4f-H1_DbWgaUv1NGgRZKfK7rrtQI_0dEdlYGBgZ7PFAKlsA_CKjFE2DSTMkXgNbCCnuOGLcx9H5zlZO4rPxi4veE-Kt5HCzlNs-2M08hS9NPzVWMpTKUl9R) | [Ben Robbins](https://url.emailprotection.link/?bolDdOGTgLxzb-dOYmCxYjShlYGy6cDM1tdiiPwjeB1WP9ZPeNSlhv65BbA3LMoPFH5P2OUW3qpkkchMWvLqOrT1khGdzLEoCh6OXDHrI7QDJg2Gbv8SnEfXekaz8wVz0) | Establish income tax credit to recruited or remote workers (Ways and Means Education) | House • Feb 06, 2024: Pending Committee Action In House Of Origin (Ways and Means Education) | [Introduced](https://url.emailprotection.link/?besWsqOShlD0X7AbgQLH1nQByG-VjlY82C-SibCxGx3kwfxWyifPkRYF-48-PdL4MScPQazLvYAuBTVcRNH7o_LIdBfOSdglMdMkGje8g2YUsQjvh38CQqQVBJIrdNayN) |
| AL 2024rs [SB 60](https://url.emailprotection.link/?bJv6KR6-1NWQx93xxkkE0y6y26cpPLpUFn_AE5KQRQCYthT3iZByoJDSu_9rH6rPfOj8VE7GVLRPOgOAi5LS26zThxNjFdMqYg3fgJr9e8uYvveen3f05glEd_WqMBcB-) | [Arthur Orr](https://url.emailprotection.link/?byvXGdibqvwBkR1L2MhVCL0Zx7_rPQi63kmaAHdAiMrLLxkPiuQTdzdixO06e-72zmKTKUL_4YVOwKp6J8yD56B3jto-1E0gThzuV5Cfu6edPxfyrVKuQjTF53zfjcKGP) | Ports, inland facilities, $5 million of additional motor fuel tax levied by act 2019-2 transferred from Rebuild Alabama fund to ADECA, create inland port and intermodal fund (Finance and Taxation General Fund) | Senate • Feb 06, 2024: Pending Committee Action In House Of Origin (Finance and Taxation General Fund) | [Introduced](https://url.emailprotection.link/?bBxNbr7F5HcUorTjn1IFtg-sdtVE0Jh6QAssQyETT3TEDPEfijydWeG9P1IxxWPhmHWV6CPrdsM9qU4T2sXAPd7oHAPcceoJavIPXfsckxGcxvy1pGXorEzGMCuPMCCOd) |