



# ALABAMA HOUSE MAJORITY CAUCUS

ALABAMA STATE HOUSE

MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36130

**NATHANIEL LEDBETTER**  
**MAJORITY LEADER**

**To: Alabama House Republican Caucus Members**

**From: Majority Leader Nathaniel Ledbetter**

**Date: April 2, 2021**

## **HOUSE REPUBLICAN CAUCUS TALKING POINTS MEMO FOR THE WEEK OF MARCH 29 - APRIL 2**

### **RETURN FROM SPING BREAK**

- Lawmakers returned from their traditional, mid-session Spring Break recess and focused mainly on routine and non-controversial measures this week.
  - A plateful of important issues still awaits the Legislature's attention including consideration of the General Fund and Education Trust Fund budgets, the passage of which is the body's sole constitutional obligation, and controversial topics like legalizing cannabis for medical purposes and expanding gambling within the state.

### **"OPEN FOR BUSINESS" BILL**

- The Legislature awarded final passage to a bill by State Rep. Jamie Kiel (R - Russellville) that prohibits the government from choosing "winners and losers" when designating which businesses may operate during an emergency order.
- House Bill 103 was prompted during last year's COVID-19 "Stay at Home" lockdown when big box retailers were allowed to operate while other mom-and-pop small businesses selling the same goods were forced to shutter.
  - Some months after issuing her order, Ivey expressed regret for labeling businesses as "essential and non-essential" and told a Huntsville Chamber of Commerce event, "In trying to reduce the number of people interacting with others one of my first Stay at Home orders set out essential and non-essential businesses, and that was a mistake. "I never wanted to create the belief that my administration viewed certain businesses as more important than others. All jobs and all businesses are essential and important to our state."

- The governor and state health officer would not be prohibited from issuing public health orders and mandates, but the bill would allow businesses or houses of worship that are able to follow the public health guidelines to open.
  - The measure would apply to orders that are issued during times of “pandemic, epidemic, bioterrorism event, or the appearance of a novel or previously controlled or eradicated infectious disease or biological toxin.”
- The Senate added an amendment requiring the Alabama State House to be open to the public during times of pandemic, which required the bill to be returned to the House for reconciliation. The House concurred with the amendment.
- The bill now goes to Gov. Ivey’s desk for her consideration.

### **ABSENTEE BALLOTING DEADLINE REFORM**

- The Alabama House on Tuesday approved a bill by State Rep. Alan Baker (R - Brewton) that shortens the deadline to mail absentee voter applications from five days to ten days.
  - Baker said that slower post office delivery times requires the deadline to be adjusted so that applications can be received and processed in a timely manner.
  - Applications may still be submitted in-person within the five-day window, according to Baker’s bill.
  - The legislation also allows the counting of absentee ballots to begin at 7 a.m. on Election Day rather than after polls close as currently required.
- Baker’s bill is one of several election reform measures that have been sponsored by Republican House members this session in order to ensure that serious problems involving the casting and counting of ballots in other states during the 2020 presidential election do not occur here, in Alabama.