



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

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HOUSE REPUBLICAN CAUCUS TALKING POINTS MEMO FOR THE WEEK OF MARCH 1 - 5

Executive Agreement Oversight Bill

- The Alabama House on Tuesday approved a bill by Rules Committee Chairman Mike Jones (R - Andalusia) that provides the Legislature with an additional layer of oversight and information on executive branch contracts, leases, and agreements exceeding \$10 million.
 - Under the provisions of House Bill 392, which appears first on Tuesday's special order calendar, a new Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Obligation Transparency that consist of the chair and vice chair of the House Ways and Means General Fund Committee, the chair and vice chair of the Senate Finance and Taxation General Fund Committee, and the ranking minority members of both committees would be formed.
 - The oversight panel will be tasked with reviewing state agency agreements and obligations totaling at least \$10 million or five percent of the agency's annual appropriation.
 - If no objection is raised by the committee within 45 days of an agreement being submitted, it will be deemed approved, but if it is disapproved, the agreement will remain suspended until final adjournment of the next regular session, which will provide the Legislature an opportunity to address any issues by statute or other legislative action, if necessary.
 - Jones noted that the legislation applies only to future, not current, contracts, leases, and other obligations.
 - The bill was prompted by Gov. Kay Ivey's plan to sign 30-year leases on three new men's prisons without legislative consent.

- The lease payments for all three prisons are expected to total about \$3 billion over 30 years. Payments will start when the prisons are ready to use, which is expected to be in 2025.

Open For Business Bill

- The House also on Tuesday approved 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.
- During lengthy debate on the measure, Kiel said his bill 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.”
- Kiel’s bill would not prohibit the governor and state health officer from issuing public health orders and mandates, but it 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”
- House Democrats filibustered the bill, which eventually passed on a 75-22 party-line vote.

Military Stability Commission Package

- The Alabama House on Thursday awarded final passage a legislative package that is designed to retain, protect, and improve the federal military presence and investment across Alabama.

- Among the bills in the package are measures that will allow military dependents attending public colleges and universities in Alabama to pay in-state tuition while stationed here, expand services for military veterans, guarantee the acceptance of out-of-state occupational licenses for military dependents in various professions, and others.
 - When the Department of Defense recently released its grading system that determined Space Command Headquarters would locate in Huntsville, one of the few areas in which Alabama scored low was professional license reciprocity for military spouses.
 - This package, which will soon be signed into law, addresses that specific need, among others, and helps ensure that other states can no longer compete with us in any category.
- The federal military bases located in Alabama play an important role in our state's economy and job climate, so retaining and, when possible, expanding their footprint must always be a top priority.
 - Mayors in the cities and counties that house military bases will attest to how vital our military bases are in providing employment opportunities and revenues in local economies across the state.
- Even the smallest advantage we put in place can tip the balance of whether a base stays here, leaves here, or expands here, and the legislative package that was given final passage by the House signals that Alabama is serious about keeping and building upon our military bases.
 - Offering items like in-state college tuition and additional job opportunities for military dependents not only makes Alabama more attractive to Pentagon decision-makers, it also demonstrates a needed measure of our state's famous southern hospitality.
- The legislative package is the result of work by the Alabama Military Stability Commission, a panel that was created by state statute in 2011.
 - In addition to several elected officials and cabinet members, the commission also includes regional appointees from areas across the state with a heavy defense concentration.