



# 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: May 7, 2021**

## HOUSE REPUBLICAN CAUCUS TALKING POINTS MEMO FOR THE WEEK OF MAY 3 - 7

### HONEST ELECTION REFORM

- The Alabama Legislature on Thursday awarded final approval to a measure by State Rep. Chris Blackshear (R - Smiths Station) that imposes criminal penalties on Alabamians who cast multiple ballots both within the state and out-of-state, as well.
  - The measure was necessary because Alabama law makes it a crime to cast more than one ballot in the same election within the state, but the statute did not cover individuals who cast an in-state ballot and then travel out-of-state to cast another ballot in the same election.
    - In towns like Phenix City, which borders neighboring Georgia and is included in Blackshear's legislative district, the temptation to cross state lines and cast an additional ballot naturally increases when elections are predicted to be especially close.
      - During the 2018 election, at least six individuals cast a ballot in Alabama and also cast a ballot in another state, according to Blackshear.
  - Under the compromise bill approved by both chambers, House Bill 167 makes multi-state balloting a Class A misdemeanor, which is the highest level of misdemeanor and carries penalties of up to one year in jail and a fine of \$6,000, for the first offense.
    - Subsequent offenses will be classified as a Class C felony, which is punishable by a jail term of 366 days to 10 years and a fine of up to \$15,000.

- Some House Democrats opposed to the legislation argued during the original debate that limiting Alabamians to only one ballot per election constituted “voter suppression.”
- The measure goes to the governor’s desk for review and signature.

## **INNOVATION COMMISSION LEGISLATION**

- The Alabama Legislature on Tuesday awarded final passage to a bill by State Rep. Bill Poole (R - Tuscaloosa) that creates a public-private partnership to promote entrepreneurship and other business development across the state.
  - House Bill 540 creates the Alabama Innovation Corporation, which seeks to boost entrepreneurship, rural business development, research initiatives at existing companies, and access to advanced tech skills that will drive a modern workforce.
  - The corporation is charged with serving as a catalyst for transforming Alabama into a technology and innovation center, triggering growth and fostering job skills not just in urban but also rural areas.
  - The board of the corporation will consist of five ex-officio members, which includes the governor and members of the legislative leadership, and six unpaid at-large members appointed by the governor from across the state.
    - Among the qualifications for the governor’s appointees is having served as angel investors, having had experience in entrepreneurship, possessing a background in research and development, and others.
  - The corporation, its initiatives, and other associated programs will fall under the “Innovate Alabama” marketing umbrella.
- The measure goes to the governor’s desk for review and signature.

## **RURAL BROADBAND**

- The Alabama Legislature on Thursday gave final approval to legislation that works to spur broadband expansion in rural Alabama.
  - Senate Bill 215 establishes the Alabama Digital Expansion Authority, which will develop a statewide connectivity plan to expand high-speed internet across the

state and determine which parts of the state qualify as rural, underserved, or unserved.

- Under the bill, which was carried in the House by Rep. Danny Garrett (R - Trussville) and sponsored by Sen. Del Marsh (R - Anniston), the Alabama Digital Expansion Authority would be in charge of ongoing upgrades to networks, technological equipment, and end user devices necessary to expand access.
  - The authority is also tasked with developing the most cost-effective way to expand fiber network throughout the state.
- The measure goes to the governor's desk for review and signature.

### **EXECUTIVE AGREEMENT OVERSIGHT BILL**

- The Senate Finance and Taxation General Fund Committee on Wednesday also 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, the Permanent Contract Review Oversight Committee will be given the additional task of reviewing executive branch state agency agreements and obligations totaling at least \$10 million, although the Alabama Department of Transportation is exempted from the requirement.
  - If the committee does not object to an agreement within 30 days of being submitted, it will be deemed approved, but if it is disapproved, the agreement will be suspended for an additional 45 days.
  - 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.

- It was recently announced that London-based financial services company Barclays and two other investment banks decided to withdraw as the underwriters for the private prison agreement between the Ivey administration and CoreCivic, and it is uncertain how the project will proceed with current events and social upheaval placing pressure on banks and financiers to avoid engagement in the correctional system sector.
- Passage of the bill on the session's second-to-last day and just before a final week-long recess places the Legislature in position to override a gubernatorial veto if Ivey refuses to sign the measure.