



VALUES THAT MATTER.

A Vision That Works.

2019 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Alabama House Democrats will continue to fight for the issues that matter - investing in public education and expanding our first class Pre-K system - making sure that every Alabamian has access to quality, affordable healthcare, reforming our broken criminal justice system, and expanding access to the polls.

Alongside these ambitious policy priorities, House Democrats are turning to bold, creative new ideas for generating revenue, because we believe that there are smart, common-sense solutions to funding questions that will not burden the backs of working Alabamians.

We look forward to working hard on behalf of all Alabamians in the coming months, as together we fight to move Alabama forward.

OUR BRIGHTEST FUTURE - ADVANCING EDUCATION

SUPPORTING OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS:

The first step to success in life for Alabama students begins with a first-class education. We must **reverse the chronic pattern of underinvestment** in our schools, students, teachers, and classroom technology. By investing in our public schools now, we can rebuild our skilled workforce and **lay the foundation for economic growth and development** for years to come. After all, to succeed in the global economy, our young people must have access to the latest technology, training, and opportunities that ensure future achievement.

PRIORITIZING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION:

Quality early childhood education is the **key to putting Alabama children on the right track** in school, work, and life. Strong, well-rounded Pre-K programs offer our young people an increasingly essential start to their academic careers. From early literacy initiatives, to STEM activities, to exposure to foreign languages, to art and music, strong Pre-K programs are the building blocks for life-long learning. In addition, **expanding Cradle-to Pre-K programs** for children and families in need will close the achievement gap in low-income communities.

FOCUSING ON COLLEGE AND CAREER-READINESS:

In addition to encouraging sufficient funding for higher education, House Democrats will champion programs that **prepare young people for college and community college life**, as well as other invaluable post-secondary opportunities. Dual enrollment programs will allow more high-school students to get a head start (and reduce higher education costs) by taking college-level courses. Public-private partnerships can offer **targeted jobs, skill development, and career-preparation opportunities** to those who have been historically underserved by our educational system.

INVESTING IN OUR EDUCATORS:

All too often, Alabama teachers are forced to subsidize classroom learning from their own wallets, pocket-books, and paychecks. They do so because they care about their students. Currently, the **lack of adequate compensation** is pushing some of our best and most passionate teachers into retirement or other careers. To shine brighter than our neighbors in Tennessee and Georgia—and to make Alabama a more desirable place to live and work for teachers and their families—we must **invest in order to attract and retain top-notch, dedicated teachers**. This includes providing access to real opportunities for professional growth. In addition, it's high time that our retired educators receive a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA).

HEALTH & WELLNESS - ENSURING ACCESS TO QUALITY CARE

ENSURING ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE:

Alabamians face an uncertain landscape when it comes to access to affordable, quality health care. House Democrats want to work with the federal government and a transitional health care system to make sure all citizens, **regardless of income level or pre-existing conditions**, can purchase insurance and stay with the physician of their choice. **No working man or woman should be an accident or diagnosis away from financial ruin**. We must provide assurance to families that an unexpected sickness will not deplete their life savings.

CONTROLLING COSTS:

House Democrats support **common sense approaches to controlling rising health care costs** while ensuring all residents have access to quality care. That includes addressing prescription drug prices and transparency, increasing access to mental health services and substance abuse treatment, exploring innovative approaches to health care delivery, and emphasizing community wellness initiatives and preventive care to reduce long-term costs. In addition, we support **expanding Medicaid** to assist our most financially vulnerable citizens and shore up rural hospitals and rural health care providers.

FIGHTING THE EPIDEMIC OF ADDICTION:

Opioid and prescription drug addiction have become a widespread public-health crisis for our state and our nation. We must **combat this epidemic head-on** through a cohesive and multi-pronged approach that includes law enforcement, public health, and community-based initiatives. House Democrats will work for **bipartisan solutions** that promote education and prevention programs, crack down on unscrupulous over-prescribers, and expand recovery and treatment options for those suffering from addiction.

SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH:

We have both a moral and legal responsibility to provide quality mental health treatment options for Alabamians suffering from mental illness. Failure to meet that commitment with adequate funding levels and effective programs has only led to increased costs in emergency care and incarceration, not to mention the **human cost in countless lives** devastated and families disrupted. House Democrats will thoroughly review existing state-funded mental health services to ensure that such appropriations are effective and efficient. And we will advocate for policies that **expand access to mental health treatment** so that no family must go without the resources they need when a loved one is in crisis.

VIABLE, SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES - IMPROVING ECONOMIC VITALITY

REBUILDING OUR WORKFORCE:

We are in the midst of one of the fastest periods of change in human history. House Democrats believe we must anticipate and swiftly respond to economic changes by **ensuring that businesses have access to the skilled workforce** and the human capital they need to thrive. Starting in high school, we must strive to craft innovative workforce development opportunities for young Alabamians by promoting job-shadowing and workforce training programs. **Expanding trade and apprenticeship programs** will give students hands-on experience in vocational and technical careers by providing real-world job situations and connections.

FIGHTING FOR WORKING FAMILIES:

Alabama workers deserve a **fair shot and a level playing field** in pursuing the American Dream. That's why they need access to sustainable, living-wage jobs and career opportunities. House Democrats will promote policies that break the cycle of poverty by promoting entrepreneurship and assisting low-income, working families with access to higher education and low-interest loan programs. We support allowing local and municipal governments the freedom to set the minimum wage and will fight to end the regressive tax on groceries that unfairly burdens low-income earners. And we **stand with working and middle-class families** on the dire need for paid maternal leave so that no parent must choose between a job and quality time with a healthy newborn. Finally, House Democrats will champion efforts to address the gender pay gap and end wage discrimination.

PROMOTING RURAL VITALITY:

House Democrats will strive to strengthen the connection to rural areas through investments in public infrastructure and improved access to medical care. The **ongoing closures of rural hospitals is a crisis** that calls for immediate and lasting action in how vital health care services are delivered to some of our most vulnerable residents. It requires an **innovative, flexible, and sustainable approach** to a very complex problem. At the same time, we must work to bolster rural economies through upgrades to water, sewer, transportation, and technological infrastructure. House Democrats support working with the federal government and partnering with private enterprise to build the infrastructure necessary, including rural broadband, to greatly enhance the quality of life in our small town communities

INCREASING REVENUE:

So many of the policy goals envisioned in this platform are not possible absent sufficient revenue to support them. House Democrats believe it's time to **enact a lottery** to support investments in this state. Additional revenue is needed to fund Pre K-12 education, higher education scholarships, economic development (rural, suburban and urban) and the elimination of the tax on groceries. In addition, Alabama must consider legalizing medical marijuana for the benefit of both seriously ill patients and a stronger bottom line. Medical marijuana can be both a compassionate choice for those with severe ailments and a source of **hundreds of millions of dollars in tax revenue**. These new sources of revenue will go a long way in alleviating cyclical budget crises and getting Alabama on sound financial footing.

RESPONSIBLE RESTORATION - REFORMING CRIMINAL JUSTICE

FOCUSING ON REDUCING RECIDIVISM:

Alabama prisons and local supervision programs exist to keep our communities safe. But to accomplish this goal their primary focus cannot just be security, but also **rehabilitation and reentry**. Rather than continue

with obsolete and outmoded practices that hurt so many communities, House Democrats favor an effective, evidence-based approach to corrections. Through the implementation of prevention and rehabilitation programs - **proven programs that work** - we can reduce recidivism and boost the success rate of an ex-offender's reentry into society.

REFORMING SENTENCES AND TRANSFORMING LIVES:

House Democrats support a comprehensive and pragmatic approach to the state's criminal justice challenges and urgent prison crisis. Plans to spend nearly a billion dollars on new prisons calls for a close, hard look at the policies and practices that feed our overpopulated and under-resourced system. **House Democrats do not believe we can just build our way out of this crisis.** We must examine evidence-based, comprehensive solutions including community-based treatment and supervision alternatives that are both **cost-efficient and more effective.** Furthermore, marijuana decriminalization deserves open discussion and honest consideration as our antiquated, ill-defined laws from the drug-war era continue to cost millions in taxpayers dollars while also devastating lives and communities.

THE CORNERSTONE - PROTECTING VOTER RIGHTS AND ACCESS

UPLIFTING ALL ALABAMA VOICES:

All Alabamians have a right to know that their voices are heard, their words matter, and their votes count. House Democrats stand for policies that aim to **expand and improve turnout at the ballot box**, not discourage and disenfranchise voters. That includes expanding voting rights to include access to early voting and automatic voter registration and restoration. We support efforts and policies to educate young people on the importance of voting while ensuring that the elderly and infirm can exercise their democratic rights. **Archaic and unnecessary barriers to voting must be removed** so that no eligible voter regardless of age, ability, income, or geographic location is denied the right to vote. That is the Alabama way and the American way.

TRANSPARENT GOVERNMENT - ENDING CORRUPTION

ENDING CORRUPTION TO RESTORE TRUST IN GOVERNMENT:

House Democrats know that state government must operate **openly, efficiently, and be accountable** to Alabamians. Lax campaign finance laws, a long history of cronyism, and a lack of transparency in Montgomery have led to an erosion of public confidence in state government. We are committed to enacting and enforcing tough ethical standards, including strong campaign finance, anti-corruption, election, and open records and open meeting laws. **The culture of Montgomery must change and it starts with us.** Alabamians deserve a state run by individuals who take the concept of public service seriously and put the people first. Good, clean government is the way to keep our state running strong.

