

*67 Counties, **One** Voice in the Alabama Legislature*

August 22, 2016

Special Session | Legislative Report

The Alabama Legislature is set to reconvene tomorrow afternoon for the 6th meeting day of the special session. Before adjourning on Friday evening, the Senate surprised almost everyone in Montgomery when it narrowly passed a proposed constitutional amendment to allow a lottery in Alabama.

At least two other bills that are important to counties – legislation necessary to address questions surrounding the passage of local bills and the distribution of the BP settlement revenue – are nearing final passage. County leaders are encouraged to review the items below and make the appropriate contacts **TODAY**.

BP Settlement Distribution

A Senate committee on Friday approved a House-passed bill (HB 36 by Rep. Steve Clouse) that would authorize the state to take a \$639 million one-time payment for its BP oil spill claims. The measure is expected to reach the Senate floor as early as Tuesday.

Under the House-passed version, \$448 million would go towards reversing the earlier withdrawal of almost \$580 million from the Alabama Trust Fund to prop up the ailing state General Fund Budget. The repayment of this money will produce larger annual investment payments from the Alabama Trust Fund and, therefore, larger payments to counties.

The measure also allocates up to \$191 million to road and bridge projects in Mobile and Baldwin counties and will clear the way for some \$70 million in Medicaid spending in the coming budget year.

The Association supports the full repayment of the moneys owed to the Alabama Trust Fund. The Association also believes there is a clear path, which would include the passage of a 6-cents increase in the state gasoline and diesel fuel tax, to provide funding for the priority road projects in Mobile and Baldwin; funding for Medicaid; full repayment of moneys owed to the Alabama Trust Fund **AND the provision for road money for the entire state**.

County leaders are urged to contact their Senators to ask that they only support a global and comprehensive solution that will meet all the objectives outlined above.

Proposed Amendment Protecting Local Laws

A ruling by the Jefferson County Circuit Court has placed in question the procedure used to enact almost 700 existing local laws. The uncertainty surrounds the number of votes necessary to allow the Legislature to consider the local bills BEFORE enacting the annual state and education appropriation bills.

The bill addressing this issue (SB 7 by Sen. Cam Ward) has passed the Senate and could reach the House floor on Tuesday. At this point, the Association is seeking a solution that will address the existing laws that

are under review as well as establish a pathway for future local laws to be enacted without similar questions.

Please ask your House members to support changes to SB 7 that will address both goals – ratifying the existing local laws and changing the procedure for considering such bills in the future. Otherwise, House members are asked to withhold their support of SB 7.

OTHER TOP BILLS OF INTEREST

Lottery

The Alabama Senate passed Governor Bentley's lottery proposal on Friday afternoon by a slim vote of 21 to 12. The bill had to receive 21 votes in the Senate in order to move to the House.

This bill is now the only lottery proposal that is in position to receive final passage in time to make the November ballot. In its current form, the bill designates 10 percent of lottery proceeds for education and 90 percent to the General Fund Budget for services such as Medicaid. It only allows for lottery tickets and prohibits all other forms of gambling.

If the House approves the legislation by Wednesday, the proposal will go on the November ballot.

Pistol Permits for Veterans

Under current law, a retired veteran, for purposes of securing a free pistol permit, is defined as a non-disability retiree from active military duty. HB 42 by Rep. David Standridge makes a technical change to the definition to specify that all veterans retired from active military duty are eligible for a pistol permit at no cost.